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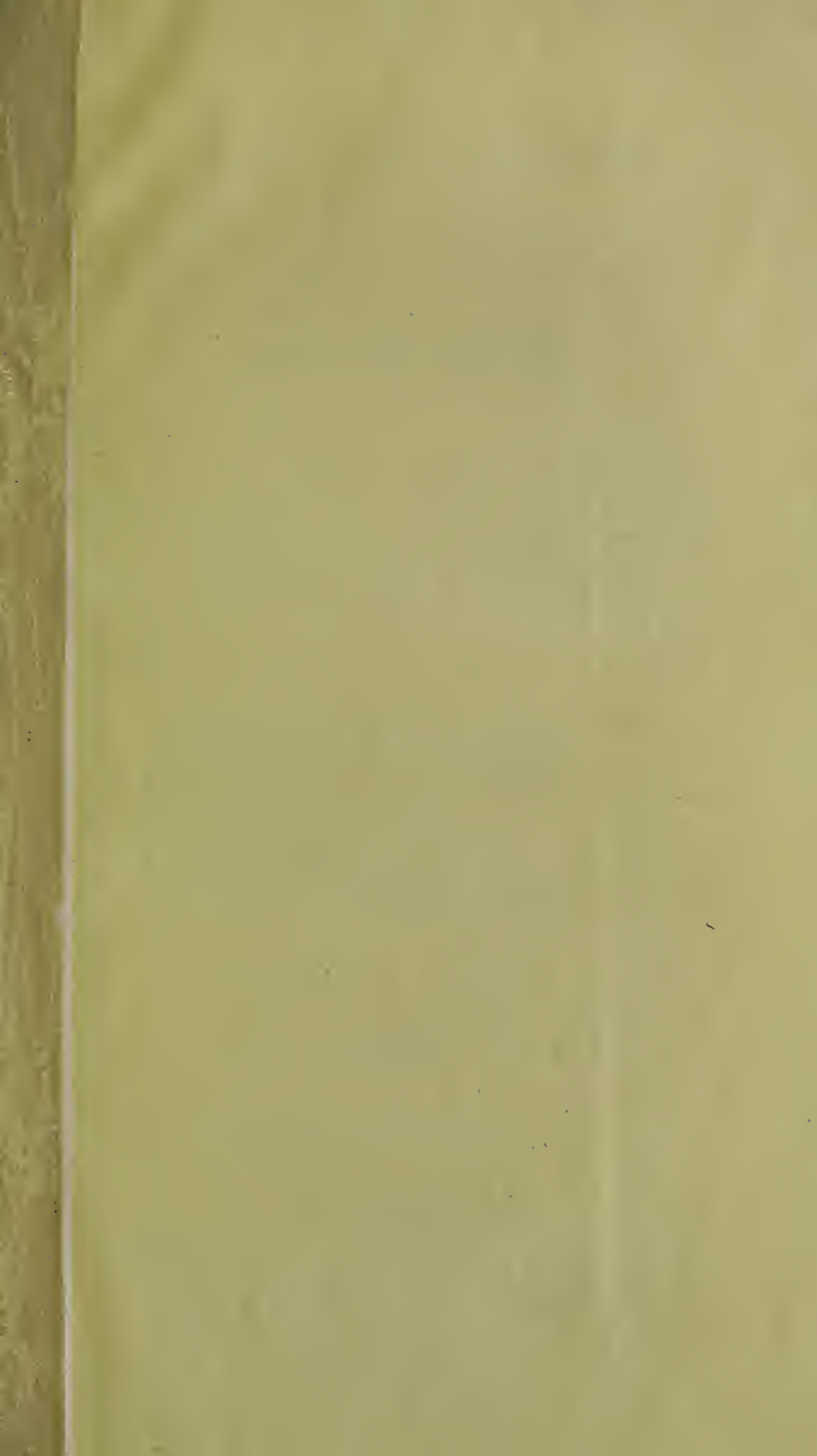
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ETHEL CHURCHILL :

OR,

THE TWO BRIDES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

Chandon

“ THE IMPROVISATRICE,” “ FRANCESCA CARRARA,”

“ TRAITS AND TRIALS OF EARLY LIFE,”

ETC. ETC.

“ Yet knowing something — dimly though it be ;
And, therefore, still more awful — of that strange
And most tumultuous thing, the heart of man.
It chanceth oft that, mix'd with nature's smiles,
My soul beholds a solemn quietness
That almost looks like grief, as if on earth
There were no perfect joy, and happiness
Still trembled on the brink of misery.” — WILSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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ETHEL CHURCHILL.

CHAPTER I.

THE CORONATION.

What memories haunt the venerable pile!
It is the mighty treasury of the past,
Where England garners up her glorious dead.
The ancient chivalry are sleeping there —
Men who sought out the Turk in Palestine,
And laid the crescent low before the cross.

The sea has sent her victories: those aisles
Wave with the banners of a thousand fights.
There, too, are the mind's triumphs — in those tombs
Sleep poets and philosophers, whose light
Is on the heaven of our intellect.
The very names inscribed on those old walls
Make the place sacred.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

I SUPPOSE, my dear uncle, that we shall all
now come to our senses — that is, those who
have any senses to which they could come —

for the coronation is over. We have talked of nothing during the last six weeks, but ermine and purple velvet. The day has been devoted to walking up and down the room, practising the stately pace with which we were to enter the abbey; and all night to dreaming that none looked so well as ourselves. Peers have been at a premium — that is, the unmarried ones; not an heiress but would have waved settlements altogether for the sake of walking in the procession. I can assure you I felt quite glad that I was married — glad for the first and last time, *peut-être*.

Will you believe me, dearest uncle, when I say, that there are times when I could almost wish that I loved my husband? I often feel, in spite of the perpetual gaiety in which I live, so lonely and so unvalued. One cannot always be amused, one would wish sometimes to be interested. How often have I feelings that crave for sympathy, and thoughts eager for communication! Lord Marchmont would enter as little into the feeling as he could understand the thought. Every day shews

me more forcibly the narrowness of his mind, and the coldness of his heart. I do not believe that, in the whole course of his life, he had ever one lofty aspiration, or one warm and generous emotion. He is selfish, but it is selfishness on a singularly small scale: he is scarcely to be called ambitious; for his desires extend no further than a riband and a title — the wish to influence or to control his fellow men by talent and by exertion, would never enter the vacant space called his mind. He loves money, because it is the only shape that power takes, which he can comprehend. Moreover, he delights in its small miserable enjoyments; he likes a fine house, fine dresses, and fine dinners; they are the material pleasures of which alone he is capable.

I am like a plant brought from the kind and genial air of your affection, into a cold and bright atmosphere — a frosty day in winter is for ever around me; while the chill hardens my nature, and I shall soon become a very icicle. What would Lord Marchmont do with

the passionate and devoted love that is in my heart? Well, better that it should there waste itself away in unbroken slumber, than waken into the bitter and burning life which is its inevitable heritage. I do not forget your lessons. What has love been to our gentle Ethel? But, how I have wandered from my subject! At all events the external world is bright enough; and why should we gaze on the dark and troubled depths of that which is within?

The spectacle was magnificent — worthy of the history that I recalled. As I looked round the noble old abbey—the most glorious tomb in which ever were enshrined the honours of the past—I marvelled at the indifference with which the ordinary hours of life treat all that makes its greatness and its poetry. I could not believe that I had never had the resolution to see our most beautiful and most national building before.

It was a strange inconsistency, but never till then had I been so much struck with the worthless and frivolous life of society. Never till then did I feel the deep and

eternal debt of gratitude that human nature owes to those who assert its higher influence; who feel their generous activity stirred by a thrice noble emulation; who appeal from the present to the future, and redeem their kind, by shewing of how much that is good and great ambition and genius are capable. But, I am wandering again,—perhaps from very consciousness that I can give you no idea of the splendid scene, which yet floats before my eyes. No person can have a greater respect for words than myself; they can do every thing but what is impossible: and there is an extraordinary excitement in a crowd, which lives in no description that I ever yet read. It is strange the influence we exercise over each other. What is tame and cold with the few, becomes passion shared with the many.

When “God save the King!” resounded through the stately abbey, the banners vibrating with the mighty music, I felt quite enthusiastic in my loyalty. I hear that the procession of the peeresses, as each after each

stepped through the arch, was quite charming. We ourselves knew the least about it; for we were too much taken up with our own appearance to think about others. After myself, to whom, of course, in my secret heart, I gave the first vote,—the beauties of the day were the Duchess of Queensberry and Lady Mary Wortley Montague. It is, after all, full dress that is the test of the gentlewoman. Common people are frightened at an unusual toilette; they think that finer clothes deserve finer manners, forgetting that any manner, to be good, must be that of every day.

But you should have seen my beauties,—so stately, yet so easy, as if the ermine mantle were familiar as the white and spreading wings are to the swan. Then the fine features were lighted up with a consciousness of looking well, which is one of beauty's most becoming moods. The Duchess of Queensberry is accustomed to that grace with which poetry invests flattery; but she is fitted to inspire it. Odd, very often rude, setting all common rules at defiance, I yet like her better than most of those with

whom I come in contact. The fact is, she is more sincere. Now, let us alter and improve as much as we can; yet nature will have what nothing else can, a hold upon the heart. You will think that I am grown "philosophical, very;" but the fact is, I am quite worn out with yesterday's fatigue. I can do nothing but lie on the couch and write to you. I always grow thoughtful when I am very tired.

We are going next week to a *fête* at Marble Hill, which is given to their majesties by Mrs. Howard. I am very desirous of going, not for the sake of the *fête*, for I am already beginning to look with an elegant indifference on pleasure; but I want to see the bride. Mr. and Mrs. Norbourn Courtenaye will then make their first appearance in public. The seclusion has been very long of their honeymoon; I wonder there was no wish for display before, as the bride is one of our richest heiresses. Norbourn has only changed suit, and taken the queen of diamonds instead of hearts. I hear that the lady is both ugly and deformed.

I wish I could prevail on Ethel to come up to London, if it were but for the sake of eclipsing her rival. I will stand godmother to the town's admiration, and promise and vow three things in its name: — first, that she will forget her faithless swain in the multitude of new ones; secondly, that she will be universally ran after; and, thirdly, that she will be brilliantly married.

And now adieu, dearest uncle, my eyes are closing with a rich confusion of banners, velvet, and jewels. I must go to sleep for a while, and dream of them.

Your affectionate

HENRIETTA.

CHAPTER II.

PUBLISHING.

Life's smallest miseries are, perhaps, its worst :
Great sufferings have great strength : there is a pride
In the bold energy that braves the worst,
And bears proud in the bearing ; but the heart
Consumes with those small sorrows, and small shames,
Which crave, yet cannot ask for sympathy.
They blush that they exist, and yet how keen
The pang that they inflict !

IT was one of those bright days in spring, which are very spendthrifts of sunshine, when the darkest alley in London wins a golden glimpse, and the eternal mist around St. Paul's turns to a glittering haze : but the young man who was hurrying along some of the crowded streets, seemed insensible of the genial atmosphere ; he would have been equally insensible of the reverse.

Walter Maynard, for he was the hurried walker, appeared much changed ; he was thin and pale, and his cheek had that worn look which tells of bodily suffering. His dress was shabby, and arranged with little of his former attention to appearance : the eyes were larger and darker than of old, while there was an unnatural lustre, which bespoke both mental and physical fever. As he passed along, nothing seemed to catch his glance. He hurried on ; and yet, more than once, he came to almost a full stop, as if reluctant, although impatient.

It was with slow and languid steps that, at last, he entered a bookseller's shop : he gave in his name, and the young man, behind the counter, very civilly asked him to wait. He sat down, and, mechanically, turned over some volumes that lay beside him ; but their contents swam before him. The lover may tremble while waiting for the mistress on whose lip hangs the heart's doom, but I doubt whether he feels equal anxiety with the young author waiting the fiat of his publisher. One figure

after another emerged from the room behind, and at each step Walter Maynard felt a cold shudder steal over him; and then he started and coloured, lest his agitation should have been observed; but the shopboy was too used to such scenes to heed them. He never looked at the white lip, tremulous with hope, which was rather fear; he noticed not the drops that started on the forehead; what little attention he could spare from his business was given to the window; there, at least, he had the satisfaction of seeing the people passing. At last Walter Maynard's turn came: he entered a low, dark back-parlour, whose close and murky atmosphere seemed ominous; a little man was seated on a very high stool, writing at a desk before him.

“Take a seat, Mr. Maynard,” said he, in a low mysterious whisper, as if the fate of nations depended on not being overheard. He went on writing, and Walter took his seat, glad of even a momentary respite.

Curl was of very small stature, with good but restless features, and a singularly undecided

mouth. He might have sat for a personification of fear: if he moved, he seemed rather afraid of his own shadow following him too closely; if he laughed, he soon checked himself, quite alarmed at the sound. He began a conversation at your elbow; but, before it was finished, he had gradually backed his chair to the other end of the room. He always contrived to sit next the door, to which he paid more attention than to his hearer; his eye always wandering to it as if he meditated an escape, and yet this man was the most audacious libeller of his time. Reputation, feelings, or even chastisement, were as nothing in the balance weighed against his interest; life was to him only a long sum; his ledger was his Bible, and his religion, profit. For a little while he went on writing: this he did on principle.

“Authors,” he was wont to say, “come in a direct line from Reuben; they are unstable as water, and never know exactly what it is they really do want. I always give them a little waiting, just to shew I don’t care much

about them, and so grow something rational in their demands.”

At last Curl descended from his stool, and drew a chair towards Walter. Dividing his looks between him and the door, he began:—

“ I having been looking at your pamphlet, and shewing it, but I mention no names. I don't see the use of names, for my part, unless it be to put in asterisks. It is — yes — very, indeed.”

“ What!” exclaimed Walter.

“ Yes, extremely so,” replied Curl.

“ You think it, then, clever,” returned the anxious listener.

“ Why, my good young friend,” exclaimed the publisher, glancing suspiciously at the door, “ you would not have me tell an author to his face that his works were not clever? You are too irritable a race for that!”

“ But do you think that it will suit you?” asked Maynard.

“ Why, no — no — yes, perhaps; but we must talk a little about it. You reason too

much; all young people are so fond of reasons, as if reasons were of any use."

"Why," cried his companion, "mine is a dispassionate appeal to the reason of the public: my object is to convince."

"As if you ever convinced people by reason!"

"But I feel it is a duty I owe to the public," said the author.

"Good Lord! oh, Lord! Why, my dear sir, what duty do you owe to the public? The only duty you owe is to me, your publisher! It is your duty to write what will sell, and I tell you reasons are unmarketable commodities."

"What would you have me do?" sighed Maynard, in a desponding tone.

"Why, pepper and salt your reasons!" cried Curl, forgetting to look at the door for a moment: "your pamphlet has talent; but talent is like a cucumber, nothing without the dressing. You must be more personal."

"I detest personalities," said Walter.

“ And I detest nonsense,” said the other ;
“ and I also detest works that won’t sell. You mean to make scribbling your business ?”

“ I am,” replied our young poet, “ anxious to devote my feeble services to the cause of literature.”

“ A very well-turned sentence,” said the bookseller : “ I don’t, myself, dislike a fine phrase now and then ; but fine words, like fine clothes, don’t do to wear every day : you would soon find yourself without any to wear.”

“ Very true,” thought Maynard, glancing unconsciously at his own threadbare apparel.

“ Now, my dear young friend,” continued the bookseller, “ you seem fond of reason ; let me talk a little reason to you. Here, take your pamphlet again : there is good material in it, but it requires the making up. Leave out some of your arguments, and throw in a few sentiments, — something about free-born Britons and wooden shoes ! Englishmen like to have a few sentiments ready for after-dinner use, in case of a speech. You must, also, add

a dozen or so sarcasms, and say a little more about bribery and corruption. Above all, be sure that your jokes are obvious ones, and I know the thing will be a hit!"

Walter took up his manuscript with an embarrassed and mortified air. He had written with all the enthusiasm of a patriot of one-and-twenty, who believes, and who hopes; suddenly, his high profession of faith, his earnest appeal to the noblest principles, was changed into a mere question of business. Moreover, in his secret soul he despised the plan proposed; but what could he do? his forlorn garret rose visibly before him, he could not even pay its rent for the coming week. It was the first conflict between the expedient and the ideal. For the first time, a bitter sense of how little consequence his speculative opinions could possibly be, rushed across him, and he held his papers with a hesitating grasp. Curl's quick eye caught the struggle which he yet affected not to notice.

"I must have the pamphlet by the day

after to-morrow," said he, as if considering the affair altogether settled; "and to shew you that I have a good hope of its success, here — here are ten guineas for you!" and he counted the money out upon the table.

There was something in the ring of the coin that jarred upon Walter's ear; he was ashamed of being paid,—a false shame, and yet how natural to one both proud and sensitive!

"Time enough," said he, colouring, "to pay me when my work is done."

"No, no!" interrupted Curl, "it will encourage you as a beginner. If you were an old hand at this sort of work, I could not trust you; you would spend the money, and I should see you and your pamphlet no more; but you young ones are so eager to see yourselves in print!"

"In print!" there was a charm in that phrase that decided Walter. He took up the papers, and assured Curl that he should have sentiment and sarcasm enough by the following night.

“ Good Lord!—oh, Lord!” cried the astonished publisher: “ you are a young hand at your work. Why, you are walking off, and have left your money behind you!”

CHAPTER III.

ALTERATION.

My heart hath turned aside
From its early dreams ;
To me their course has been
Like mountain streams.

Bright and pure they left
Their place of birth ;
Soon on every wave
Came taints of earth.

Weeds grew upon the banks,
And, as the waters swept,
A bad or useless part
Of all they kept,

Till it reached the plain below,
An altered thing
Bearing gloomy trace,—
Of its wandering.

WALTER again pursued his way, lost in a very mixed reverie ; sometimes writhing under an

idea of degradation, in thus making a trade of his talents; and then, again, somewhat consoled by the pride of art; for how many felicitous and stinging epigrams arose in his mind! "It is," thought he, "a political warfare that I am carrying on, and ridicule is as good a weapon as any other."

Lost in meditated satire, he arrived at the shop of Mr. Lintot. It was larger, cleaner, and lighter, than the one that he had just left, and a strong smell of roast meat came from the regions below. He was not kept waiting an instant: "Mr. Lintot is expecting you," said the shopboy, who looked just fresh from the country; and he was shewn into his room. It was wonderfully airy for that part of town; and two nicely clean windows, with flowerpots on the sill, looked into a garden: at one of these was seated Mr. Lintot. Like all cockneys, he had rural tastes; and he always intended, when he had made a certain sum, that he would buy a small farm, and live in the country. He never, however, even to himself specified what the sum was to be.

Mr. Lintot was a large, and rather good-looking man — what would be called comfortable-looking, in his appearance. He had a large arm-chair, and his very substantial raiment did not appear at all likely to inconvenience him by any restraining tightness. He obviously liked being at his ease: as to meaning, his face had as little as a face could positively have. It was not till animated by some discussion, based upon the multiplication-table, that you saw how keen and shrewd those large, dull, gray eyes could become. His welcome to his visitor was more than friendly — it was paternal: he shook him by both hands, and asked so anxiously how the air of London agreed with him.

“Terrible fog, sir! — terrible fog! You did not write your pastoral poems here? Very pretty they are: I wish every body had my taste for green fields and sheep, poetry would sell then!”

“One portion of my volume, at all events, finds favour with you?” said Walter, very much encouraged by his reception.

“The whole, sir—the whole! It is a charming volume: the love verses, too,—pity that people don’t care about love; no body’s in love now-a-days!”

“But what do you say to the satires?” asked the author, not quite so elated.

“Dangerous things, sir—dangerous things!” exclaimed Mr. Lintot, drawing a deep breath of air from the open window: “do you know, sir, Curl published a lampoon on Lord Hervey the other day, who said that he would have horsewhipped him if he could have found his way into the city. Only think, sir, of horsewhipping a publisher!” and Mr. Lintot grew pale with excess of horror.

“To think of only horsewhipping one,” muttered Walter to himself; and then added aloud, “but there is nothing personal in my satire.”

“So much the worse!” exclaimed Mr. Lintot: “what is the use of denouncing a vice?—denounce the individual! What woman thanks you for a compliment addressed to the sex in general? No, no, pay one to

herself! And the same with sneers; always take care that your sneer suits some well-known individual; all his friends will have such pleasure in applying it; and you know, sir, our object is to give as much satisfaction as we can to the public."

"And now, do you think," asked Walter, "that the volume I left with you is likely to give satisfaction?"

"It is a charming book—very charming book! and I see that you are a clever young man. You were punctual to your appointment: punctuality is the first of virtues, and a sign of pretty behaviour in a young man. I foresee that you will succeed!"

"But about my volume of poems?" interrupted its author.

"Why, sir, it is hard to say," replied the cautious publisher: "poetry is not worth much at present; indeed, I never heard that it was. Homer begged his bread: you will excuse my little joke!"

"I am to understand, then," replied Maynard, "that it does not suit you?"

“ Never draw a hasty conclusion,” answered Mr. Lintot ; “ I mean to do my best for you !”

“ Do you mean to publish my poems ?” cried Walter.

“ Why, you see, sir, the times are bad, and I am no speculator. I have a wife and family, and a man with a wife and family must be just before he is generous. Besides, my two youngest children have just had the whooping-cough, and they must have a little country air : all these things are expensive. I appeal to your feelings, sir, whether you would drive a hard bargain with a man in my situation ?”

“ I leave it entirely to yourself,” replied Maynard, despondingly.

“ Sir, I will run the risk of publishing your volume. Paper and printing are terrible things ; I wish books could do without them : but I will venture. I heard you highly spoken of yesterday : we will share what profits there are, and your list of subscribers will insure us against loss.”

It did far more, by the by, to say nothing of Sir Jasper Meredith’s secret guarantee.

“ And now business being over,” said Lintot, “ will you dine with me ? I am a plain man, only a joint and a pudding, which is just ready : I like to encourage young men in being punctual.”

Walter declined the invitation, precisely because he wanted a dinner. He was, also, conscious that he had made a very bad bargain ; but how could he chaffer and dispute about things so precious as the contents of those pages which were the very outpourings of his heart ? There were recorded dreams glorious with the future, and feelings soft and musical with the past. He fancied Ethel Churchill’s soft blue eyes filled with tears, as she turned the haunted leaves of which she had been the inspiration, and he was consoled for every mortification. He walked along those crowded streets alive but to one delicious hope ; and amid poverty, labour, and discouragement, still steeped to the lip in poetry.

The fanciful fables of fairy land are but allegories of the young poet’s mind when the sweet spell is upon him. Some slight thing

calls up the visionary world, and all the outward and actual is for the time forgotten. It is a fever ethereal and lovely; but, like all other fevers, leaving behind weakness and exhaustion. I believe there is nothing that causes so strong a sensation of physical fatigue as the exercise of the imagination. The pulses beat too rapidly; and how cold, how depressed, is the reaction!

CHAPTER IV.

THE FÊTE.

Many were lovely there ; but, of that many,
Was one who looked the loveliest of any —
The youthful countess. On her cheek the dyes
Were crimson with the morning's exercise ;
The laugh upon her full red lip yet hung ;
And, arrow-like, light words flashed from her tongue.
She had more loveliness than beauty — hers
Was that enchantment which the heart confers.
A mouth, sweet from its smiles ; a large dark eye,
That had o'er all expression mastery,
Laughing the orb, but yet the long lash made
Somewhat of sadness with its twilight shade ;
And suiting well the upcast look that seemed,
At times, as it of melancholy dreamed :
Her cheek was as a rainbow, it so changed
As each emotion o'er its surface ranged —
Her face was full of feeling.

Mrs. HOWARD'S *fête* at Marble Hill more than realised all expectations. The very spring put itself forward to please her ; or, rather borrowed a day from summer. The king and queen were

in the last extremities of royal condescension. It was enough to make domestic felicity the fashion from one end of the British empire to the other, just to see the august couple walking arm in arm through the gardens; Mrs. Howard a little in advance, pointing out the beauties, and the favourites of the suite close behind. The king was fond of walking; and it is a singular instance of that feminine courage, endurance, how the queen contrived, subject as she was to the gout, to accompany him.

Queen Caroline must have been a very handsome woman; her eyes were still fine, and her smile peculiarly sweet. No one understood the science of temporising better than she did, or of

“ If she rule him, not to shew she rules.”

Give a strong mind the advantage of habit, and its dominion over the weak one is absolute. It is a strong proof of Sir Robert Walpole's sagacity, that he never for a moment mistook the real source of power. Others might court

the royal Favourite ; he saw at once that Mrs. Howard was but the shadow flung, by the queen's own good pleasure, before her. There can be no doubt but that Queen Caroline secretly enjoyed the knowledge of her influence. To a strong-minded woman, shut out from the natural sphere of the affections, what remains but the enjoyment of consciousness of power ?

Amid the brilliant crowd, that gathered on the lawns, or loitered through the saloons, no one looked more lovely than Lady Marchmont ; and it was obvious, that she enjoyed the homage by which she was surrounded. Tired of seeing one cavalier desert her after another, Lady Mary Wortley Montague joined the gay circle, of which her brilliant rival was the centre. By so doing, it also appeared her own — at least she was where all assembled ; none could say that she was deserted.

“ What a change ! ” exclaimed she, glancing round the room, — “ since Mrs. Howard was obliged to cut off her beautiful hair, and sell it, in order to pay for her own and her husband's dinner.”

“What a dreadful sacrifice!” exclaimed Lady Marchmont, with mock-tragedy air—“though, as Chloe would say, it was devoted to the noblest duty of humanity.”

“It is a pity, Lady Mary, that Pope now ‘disdains the shrine he once adored,’” said Lord Harvey, “or what a subject you might suggest to him in the locks of the modern Berenice. But I believe ‘Sappho’s eye, quick glancing round the park,’ has lost its ancient influence.”

“I am glad to find,” retorted her ladyship, annoyed at his allusion to lines any thing but complimentary, and too well known to need more than allusion,—“I am glad to find that Lord Harvey has, at length, found a virtue to suit him,” retorted Lady Mary; “there is candour, at least, in borrowing from the wit of others, it frankly admits that we have none of our own.”

“It is, then, a virtue,” said Lady Marchmont, good-naturedly, “that we are all likely to practise in your presence. But I go a step beyond; I candidly admit, instead of

borrowing, I would very gladly steal your wit."

"Ah!" whispered Lord Harvey, "Lady Marchmont is resolved that her very sins should be innocent. Now that she has begun to covet, it is something not worth having."

"Are you talking," interrupted Lady Mary, "of Lord Harvey's head or heart? as I hear you speaking of things not worth having."

At this juncture, their attention was attracted to a lady who passed, finely, rather than richly dressed.

"What a splendid pair of ear-rings!" exclaimed Lady Marchmont.

"Well, really," said Lord Harvey, "Lady S.'s conduct is too audacious. Why, every body knows those ear-rings were given her by that man for whom she procured the place in the Custom-house, through the queen's interest."

"Well," replied Lady Mary, "who is to know where good wine is sold, unless you hang out the bush?"

"The announcement that the banqueting-

room was thrown open, occasioned a general rush. Lady Marchmont had not yet attained that elegant audacity which forces its way through trains, ruffles, elbows, &c. ; and, with the exception of Lord Harvey, who was handing her forward, she completely lost her party. Her attention was engrossed by a young female, who, only accompanied by an elderly gentleman, was quite incapable of either advancing, or even extricating herself from the crowd. Henrietta saw at once that the youthful stranger was unaccustomed to such a scene, and that she was even more embarrassed than fatigued. They were so close that they touched each other, till the lady leant for support against Lady Marchmont. It was but for a moment ; and, recovering herself, she apologised in a voice so sweet, and so timid, that Henrietta felt a sudden and voluntary interest,—one of those attractions for which we can as little account as we can resist. She drew the arm of the trembling girl within her own, and said,—“ Suppose we try and make way to the window, we can sit there ; and

I dare say that you care as little for the banquet as I do.”

They easily reached the window, to the no small joy of the elderly gentleman, who, now that he was rid of his troublesome charge, thought that he himself could reach the royal presence; and to lose his chance of a smile from the king or queen was a dreadful thing. Lord Harvey, after seeing them securely seated, volunteered his services in procuring some sort of refreshment, so that Lady Marchmont was left alone with her new acquaintance. She was scarcely pretty, but looked so young, so delicate, and the soft colour came and went in her cheek with such sweet shyness, that Henrietta found herself every moment more and more interested. At first she had great difficulty in bringing about a conversation, the stranger was ignorant of the topics of the day, and very timid. But Lady Marchmont had a fascination about her it was impossible to resist, and they soon began talking with both ease and pleasure. Suddenly the stranger broke off abruptly in what she was

saying, her eyes grew almost brilliant with delight, and a rich crimson animated her whole countenance.

“There is my husband!” exclaimed she, in a voice trembling with emotion.

Lady Marchmont was astonished that one so young, and so shy, should be married; but she was still more astonished when she saw her husband—it was Norbourne Courtenaye.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST DOUBT.

Youth, love, and rank, and wealth — all these combined,
Can these be wretched? Mystery of the mind,
Whose happiness is in itself; but still
Has not that happiness at its own will.
She felt too wretched with the sudden fear —
Had she such lovely rival, and so near?
Ay, bitterest of the bitter this worst pain,
To know love's offering has been in vain;
Rejected, scorn'd, and trampled under foot,
Its bloom and leaves destroyed, but not its root.
“He loves me not!”—no other words nor sound
An echo in the lady's bosom found:
It was a wretchedness too great to bear,
She sank before the presence of despair!

MR. COURTENAYE was accompanied by his uncle, whom business had detained till this late hour in town. Henrietta knew and liked Lord Norbourne, but now she had only just sufficient self-control to receive his greeting with due

politeness. Mrs. Courtenaye having no feeling but that of gratitude for Henrietta's kindness, was eager to express it.

“ I am so glad you know her ! ” whispered she to her father : “ do thank her for me . ”

“ My little rustic , ” said Lord Norbourne, “ is most fortunate. Will Lady Marchmont allow her the honour of a farther acquaintance ? Permit me to present my daughter, Mrs. Courtenaye . ”

“ And my husband , ” said Constance, timidly.

“ I have already the honour of Mr. Courtenaye's acquaintance , ” replied Lady Marchmont, with a coldness that she did not even attempt to conceal ; for the image of Ethel — pale, sad, and wasting her youth in unavailing regret — arose too distinctly before her ; and if it was present to her, how forcibly did she not recall it to Norbourne Courtenaye.

Ethel, his still too much beloved Ethel, seemed actually present. What, at that moment, were her feelings ? Did she hate, did she despise him ? Was she — but that he shud-

dered to contemplate! — was she unhappy? How he longed to ask Lady Marchmont about her: though deeply mortified at the cold manner in which she received him, it shewed plainly enough what was her opinion of his conduct. Lord Norbourne saw that there was something wrong, though even his penetration was at a loss to divine what; and he, therefore, exerted himself to talk it away. In this he was seconded by Lady Marchmont; and between them, the conversation was sufficiently sustained.

Constance, encouraged by the presence of her father and husband, and shut out from the crowd, felt less timid than usual; still she could not but perceive that Norbourne's manner lacked its ordinary grace in speaking to her new friend; and yet she had never felt so anxious that he should please. Taking her earliest opportunity, she whispered,

“ Only think, Norbourne, of your knowing Lady Marchmont! do talk to her; she is so kind, so charming.”

But her words fell on unheeding ears.

Courtenaye's thoughts were far away; and Constance, shrinking into herself at the least repulse, did not attempt to speak to him again.

There is nothing in this world so sensitive as affection. It feels its own happiness too much not to tremble for its reality; and starts, ever and anon, from its own delicious consciousness, to ask, Is it not, indeed, a dream? A word and a look are enough either to repress or to encourage. Nothing is a trifle in love, for all is seen through an exaggerated medium; and Constance's attachment to her husband was of the most imaginative order — shy, fearful, little demonstrative, but how utterly devoted! It never came into her head to blame Norbourne for any thing. She did not even venture on making excuses for him: all he did appeared best, and most natural to do. She took it for granted that he was pre-occupied; and, after a moment or two of disappointment, she resumed her own peculiarly sweet and pleading smile, a smile that seemed to implore your kindness. Indeed, almost her

whole attention was soon engrossed by her brilliant companion, whose circle was increased by some three or four friends, who had but just discovered her. Till then she had never formed an idea of one so gifted and so charming. She listened with astonishment to her companion's gay sallies, and answers, as piquant as they were ready. She was astonished that any one could talk so easily to her father, that father to whom she never spoke without awe; and gazed, with enthusiastic admiration, on the beautiful face, which gave every word and smile such a charm. Such is the power of novelty, that Lady Marchmont was more flattered at the impression she produced on the unpractised stranger, than with all the homage of the courtly train that followed her.

Constance felt too pleased and too much excited for her usual silence; and she took the opportunity of the first pause in conversation to whisper to Lady Marchmont,—“ How happy Norbourne is to have the pleasure of knowing you! Has he known you long? I wonder that he never talked about you!”

“Happy!” replied Henrietta, with a sneer, a little more marked than she meant it to be. “I knew him before his marriage in the country.” Then, turning to Lord Norbourne, added,—“It is odd how much older one grows in London than any where else. I was going to have said, years ago.”

It is a strange thing, the instinct of jealousy in a woman; a sudden light seemed to burst in upon Constance. Lady Marchmont’s coldness, Norbourne’s embarrassment and coldness, led alike to one terrible conclusion. They had met before his marriage; and surely to meet Lady Marchmont must have been to love her. A mist gathered over her eyes: she felt cold and giddy. Scarcely conscious, she strove to reach her father, and fainted away in his arms!

Poor Constance was carried to a room in the house; and when, at length, she recovered, she was glad to accede to her husband’s wish of leaving the *fête*. Norbourne was almost thankful for any excuse that enabled him to avoid seeing Lady Marchmont. In vain he

sought to rally his spirits, and to conceal his depression; but the idea of Ethel mocked his efforts to forget. He remembered her solitary life, and with what delight he had once thought on her first introduction into society. Now he was joining in all its gaieties, and where was she? Still in the same seclusion, with nothing to disturb one sad remembrance: she was lonely; he dared not add, even to himself, wretched.

CHAPTER VI.

GAIETIES AND ABSURDITIES.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER
MEREDITH.

What Shakspeare said of lovers, might apply
To all the world —“ 'Tis well they do not see
The pretty follies that themselves commit.”
Could we but turn upon ourselves the eyes
With which we look on others, life would pass
In one perpetual blush and smile.
The smile, how bitter!—for 'tis scorn's worst task
To scorn ourselves; and yet we could not choose
But mock our actions, all we say or do,
If we but saw them as we others see.
Life's best repose is blindness to itself.

MY DEAREST UNCLE,—So, at last, I have
met poor Ethel's rival; and, as is always the
case when one forms an idea to one's self, she
is as different as possible from what I anti-
cipated. Pale, and delicate almost to pretti-

ness, she is timid to a painful degree; and very much in love with her husband.

Mr. Courtenaye's embarrassment, on meeting me, was too much to conceal. Ethel was plainly in his thoughts; and, if it be any consolation to her, he looks very much altered and depressed. I suppose the family estate must have been heavily burdened; and, between pride and poverty, love quitted the field, banished, if not subdued. I have seen him once or twice since, either in low or highly excited spirits. I have not met Mrs. Courtenaye again; for, twice that I called, she was too ill to see me, and she appears in public but little, owing to her health.

We go next week on a visit to Cliveden, so that I am not likely to see any thing more of them for some time; and yet I cannot help being interested in her. On my return, my first visit shall be to her.

Lady Orkney's history, to whose house we are going, is a curious one. As Miss Elizabeth Villiers, by her charms she pierced the cuirass that enveloped the well-disciplined heart of

William III. But the conquest over his affection was not half so extraordinary as the conquest over his economy: he actually conferred upon her all the private estates in Ireland of his father-in-law, King James, worth some five-and-twenty thousand a-year. This magnificent donation had, however, a most curious drawback. Out of the proceeds were to be paid two annuities; one to Lady Susan Belasye, and one to Mrs. Godfrey, both mistresses to the former monarch. It seems to me a most practical piece of sarcasm. However, parliament interfered, and an act passed, resuming all grants since the Revolution. Her royal and careful lover nevertheless found some other substantial method of shewing his favour; for the lady was very rich when she married Lord George Hamilton, afterwards created Earl of Orkney.

I must say, that, at the coronation, there was little vestige left as possible "of the charms that pleased a king." "She looked," Lady Mary Wortley said, "like an Egyptian mummy, wrought with hieroglyphics of gold." Lady

Orkney has the reputation of being very clever : I do not see much proof in a letter that she wrote to Mrs. Howard, on the occasion of the late *fête* at Clifden. It began thus :—“ Madam, I give you this trouble out of the anguish of my mind.” This anguish consists in some stools being placed instead of chairs, and Lord Grantham’s directing that there should be two table-clothes instead of one ; “ which innovation,” as she pathetically observes, “ turned all the servants’ heads.” Moreover, “ they kept back the dinner too long for her majesty after it was dished, and it was set before the fire.” She winds up by saying,—“ I thought I had turned my mind in a philosophical way of having done with the world ; but I find I have deceived myself.” Poor Lady Orkney ! it is just what we all do. However, I confess, the *fête* appeared to me most splendid ; and the royal guests as much pleased as the rest of the company.

The last *jeu d’esprit* circulating among us, is “ A Characteristic Catalogue of Pictures.” Characteristic enough some of them certainly

are ! for Mr. Onslow has contributed "A Flower-Piece;" and, if ever man talked poppies and tulips, it is our worthy and flowery speaker. "A Head Unfinished" is by Lord Townshend, of whom his colleague said, "that his brains wanted nothing but ballast!" Mr. Booth obliges us with "A Mist." He ought to be able to paint it most accurately, for he always seems in one.

Next week we go to Lord Burlington, a nobleman to whose taste for building the world is indebted for one of its chief pleasures; namely, that of finding fault. Two noble friends dined with him in his new house in Piccadilly, and next day circulated the following epigram:—

“ Possessed of one great hall for state,
Without a room to sleep or eat ;
How well you build, let flattery tell,
And all the world, how ill you dwell.”

We, however, are going to the villa at Chiswick, of which Dr. Arbuthnot says, that "it is fitted up with a cold in every corner, and a consumption by way of perspective."

Lord Harvey's remark is, that "it is too small to live in, and too large to hang to one's watch!"

I must leave off abruptly, for I hear the carriage announced; and Lord Marchmont as much objects to being kept waiting as if his time were of the least value.

Ever your most affectionate child,

HENRIETTA.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ALLUSION TO THE PAST.

Ah! there are memories that will not vanish;
Thoughts of the past we have no power to banish;
To shew the heart how powerless mere will,
For we may suffer, and yet struggle still.
It is not at our choice that we forget,
That is a power no science teaches yet:
The heart may be a dark and closed up tomb;
But memory stands a ghost amid the gloom!

“ I AM sorry,” said Lord Norbourne, “ that your protégé, Walter Maynard, should be, what I suppose he would call, so patriotic. Young men think it such an easy thing to set the world to rights. Why do you not talk him into more rational notions ?”

“ Truly, my dear uncle,” replied Courtenaye, “ it is no such easy matter reasoning with one at once firm and enthusiastic in his opinions.”

“ Well, well!” replied his uncle, drawing his arm-chair closer to the hearth, and stirring the fire into a cheerful blaze. “ Time does work wonderful changes, and in nothing so much as in opinion. In youth we enquire the sentiment,

‘ Oh, bless my country, Heaven ! he said, and died ;’

but, as we advance in life, we think,

‘ How weak it is to pity Cato’s case,

Who might have lived, and had a handsome place !’

“ Your views of human nature are any thing but encouraging,” exclaimed Norbourne.

“ I have heard much,” returned his companion, “ of the beauty of truth ; but it is a beauty no one likes to look upon. To find it out, is only to find that you have been duped in every possible manner ; and to hear it, is only to have a friend give way to his temper, and say something disagreeable to you.”

“ But what,” asked Courtenaye, “ is to become of us, when the freshness of pleasure is gone with the freshness of youth, and one illusion has faded after another ?”

“ Why,” replied Lord Norbourne, “ there remain avarice and business. I exceedingly regret that I do not, cannot force myself to love money. It is the most secure source of enjoyment of which our nature is capable. It is tangible and present ; it is subject to no imaginary miseries ; it goes on increasing ; it is a joy for ever. It exercises both bodily and mental faculties in its acquisition ; it is satisfaction to the past, and encouragement to the future.”

“ For mercy’s sake, stop !” cried Norbourne ; “ if you go on much further with this eulogium, you will send me away a confirmed miser.”

“ No such good luck,” replied Lord Norbourne, smiling ; “ the miser, like the poet, must be born. It is not to be acquired without an original vocation. In the meantime, I advise you to amuse yourself as much as you can ; and, talking of amusement, do you go to Lady Marchmont’s to-night ?”

Courtenaye started at the name ; and was too much absorbed in all it called up, to notice that his uncle’s quick, dark eye was fixed on

his face, with a glance that seemed desirous of reading his inmost thoughts.

“No,” said he, “Constance did not seem well enough to go out; and, as I am not wanted, I mean to keep my promise with Walter Maynard, and accompany him to witness the fate of his new play, which comes out to-night.”

“Constance has not been well,” observed her father, “since the *fête* at Marble Hill: we must not let her go into scenes of such fatigue.”

“And yet,” said Norbourne, “it is a dull life she often leads. Why, my dear uncle, when I come home late I always find her up in the library, copying your letters — an example, I am sure, to your other secretaries.”

“Constance is a creature only fitted to live in the quiet sphere of the affections. She is happier at home than in the midst of gaiety, which is too much for her: but her recent indisposition seems to me rather in the mind.”

The open and anxious manner in which Norbourne looked up, was sufficient answer;

but having made the allusion, his uncle felt he was bound to proceed.

“ I know I may speak to you, my dear child, with perfect confidence ; but I see clearly that Constance is suffering from an undefined jealousy of Lady Marchmont.”

“ Lady Marchmont ! ” exclaimed his nephew, with the most unfeigned surprise.

“ Why, coupling your previous acquaintance with your obvious embarrassment at meeting, can you wonder that Constance should fear the renewed influence of one so beautiful, and so fascinating ? All I know of Lady Marchmont is charming ; but she likes admiration — who does not ? and pique is an absolute passion with a woman. She may like to charm a truant lover, were it but to shew him what he has lost.”

“ My dear uncle,” replied Norbourne, after a pause of mingled embarrassment and emotion, “ you are completely mistaken. I will tell you the whole truth, and then let the subject be dropped for ever. I was making a summer tour through our country last year, and called

on a Mrs. Churchill, an old friend, and distant connexion of our family. I was received with great hospitality; and, liking the neighbourhood, accepted her invitation for a more lengthened visit. I soon lingered there from another motive. I became attached to her granddaughter; and Lady Marchmont, just then married, was the intimate friend of Miss Churchill, and was aware of my affection even before its object. I left, bound by no engagement, as I wished to consult my mother. Lady Marchmont considers my conduct most unjust, what, alas! it was to Ethel—Miss Churchill, I mean,—and resents it for her friend's sake. I have made no inquiries—I never shall. The very sorrow I may have inflicted on one woman, will make me doubly anxious to guard it from another. The happiness of Constance is to me the most sacred thing in the world. What, in this case, would you advise me to do?"

Lord Norbourne was silent, for he was touched to the heart: at last his voice became sufficiently steady to reply. "To do nothing; leave it to Constance's own good sense to dis-

cover how groundless are her apprehensions. No good ever comes of speaking on such a subject. A woman always exaggerates to herself as she talks. Silence is the first step to forgetfulness. One word about Mrs. Churchill: I know that her name is down in Sir Robert's list of confirmed Jacobites. There is a suspicion of a correspondence carried on by her means with the Court of St. Germain's. Whatever happens, she shall find a friend in me. Let me give you the satisfaction of contributing to her security."

Norbourne pressed his uncle's hand, and they parted in silence. The latter remained for a few minutes lost in thought.

"I did it for the best," exclaimed he, half aloud; "and, after all, what is love? I only hope that making an attachment an unhappy one, will not turn out the only receipt for securing its continuance."

He then drew towards the table, and was soon completely absorbed in the perusal of a memorial.

After all, there is nothing like business for

enabling us to get through our weary existence. The intellect cannot sustain its sunshine flight long; the flagging wing drops to the earth. Pleasure palls, and idleness is

“ Many gathered miseries in one name ; ”

but business gets over the hours without counting them. It may be very tired at the end, still it has brought the day to a close sooner than any thing else.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOUBTS.

Ask me not, love, what may be in my heart
When, gazing on thee, sudden teardrops start ;
When only joy should come where'er thou art.

The human heart is compassed with fears ;
And joy is tremulous, for it enspheres
An earth-born star, which melts away in tears.

I am too happy for a careless mirth —
Hence anxious thoughts, and sorrowful, have birth ;
Who looks from heaven, is half returned to earth.

How powerless is my fond anxiety !
I feel I could lay down my life for thee,
Yet feel how vain such sacrifice might be.

Hence do I tremble in my happiness ;
Hurried and dim the unknown hours press :
I question of a past I dare not guess.

LORD NORBOURNE was right in supposing
that the illness of his daughter arose from the

mind, or rather from the heart. If any thing, she exaggerated her own deficiencies; the very intensity of her affection for her husband made her feel as if he deserved even her ideal of perfection. Her introduction into the world had brought its usual bitter fruit—experience. With all the simplicity of seclusion, and a neglected education, Constance had natural talents, and that fine sense which originates in fine feeling. She shrank from talking herself; but she listened with an attention the more keen, as it was undisturbed by most of the usual distractions. Chiefly accustomed to the society of her father and her husband, her mind, unconsciously both to herself and to them, was every day acquiring new powers, only restrained by her naturally timid temper.

But was she happier for her knowledge? Alas, no! she learnt to doubt and to fear. The sneers she now so often heard pointed at others, she took for granted would, also, not spare herself; and what effect might they not have on Norbourne? She had overheard more than one cruel sarcasm on her personal ap-

pearance ; she heard beauty so vaunted, that it appeared to her necessary to Love.

Her delicate frame was utterly incapable of supporting the fatigue and late hours of the society in which she so suddenly found herself placed ; and the exertion to please, and to appear pleased, produced that usual reaction which is so oppressive to the spirits. She had no female friend or relative in whom she could confide ; and the greater portion of her time was necessarily passed alone. To catch the last sound of Norbourne's footstep ; to spring forward delighted on his return ; to watch his every look, and treasure every word ; to surround him with a thousand tender cares which have only existence in feminine solicitude—so was her whole existence employed. She would have made any sacrifice to gratify even his slightest wish ; or, rather, she would not have made any : for, nothing to her could have appeared a sacrifice, if for him.

Her husband was not—could any man be ?—insensible to a devotion so meek and so entire. To hear her express a wish, and to

gratify it, was the same thing. His kindness was almost womanly in its anxiety and delicacy: he gave up amusements and engagements to sit, evening after evening, by her languid couch: but one thing was wanting—love alone can answer love; and, kind as he was, attentive as he was, the seeking heart of Constance pined with a perpetual want.

Her meeting with Lady Marchmont gave a sudden clue to an unhappiness, I should rather say a want of happiness, unacknowledged even to herself. A terrible fear which, the more she thought it over, grew more like truth, took possession of her mind. Courtenaye had loved the brilliant stranger whom he now met with such obvious reluctance. What could have separated them? To Constance it appeared impossible that Courtenaye could ever have been rejected; but, whatever the cause had been, to her it mattered not: she looked only to the hopelessness of ever inspiring love in one who had loved Lady Marchmont. She tortured herself by recalling every word and look of her too gifted rival; she remembered her as

she sat in the window-seat, gleams of sunshine reflected on her glossy black hair, black with that glancing purple bloom as it is only seen elsewhere in nature on the neck of the raven. The bright face, yet brighter with animation—Constance remembered its effect on herself, as well as the circle of which the lovely countess was the idol. She hid her face on her arm, as if by so doing she could shut out the image which pursued her. Just then Norbourne entered the chamber; and, fancying from her attitude that his wife was asleep, he approached softly, and drew a large shawl around her. This little act completely overcame Constance; the tears rushed into her eyes, and, rising up, she hastily leant her head on his shoulder to conceal them.

“You must not sit up for me to-night,” said he, “for I shall be late; and, dearest, you are not strong enough for our London hours.”

There was that in this little speech that curdled the blood at her heart.

“Lady Marchmont’s dinners are very gay,

I believe?" replied she, in a low and constrained voice.

"So I hear," answered Courtenaye; "but, as you are not well enough to go, I do not feel bound to go either. My engagement is at the Haymarket theatre, to witness the fate of a new play by Walter Maynard, whose poems we have so often read together."

"Oh, how I hope it will succeed!" exclaimed she; her sudden feeling of relief giving unusual energy to her words.

"I hope so, indeed!" replied her husband: "but now, Constance, be a good child, and go to bed; for, I forewarn you, I will tell you nothing about it till to-morrow, at the hour

‘ When lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,
And sleepless lovers just at twelve awake.’ ”

He then left her, and Constance held her breath to catch the last sound of his receding steps.

"He is, at least, not gone to Lady Marchmont's," murmured she; but, a moment after, she reproached herself for her joy. What!

could she wish him to give up an amusement? Perhaps he had seen her dislike, and had yielded to it: she could not bear to think that he had made the least sacrifice for her. She rose from her seat, and began to pace the room with hurried and agitated steps; suddenly she stopped, and earnestly contemplated a picture of her husband, that hung opposite.

“How handsome he is!” exclaimed she, despondingly: “how well he looks his noble and ancient race!”

She then turned to a mirror beside, and gazed on her own countenance: she could not see its sweet expression, she only saw features contracted with anxiety, a cheek pale as death, and eyes filled with tears. The contrast was too painful; and, sinking back on the couch, gave way to a passionate burst of tears. Again she rose, but it was to drop on her knees, her hands clasped in earnest prayer.

“My God,” she whispered, “I am but what thou hast willed I should be! Forgive the sorrow that questions of thy righteous pleasure; forgive the human and sinful nature

that murmurs when it should submit: let me not be punished in him. Father of mercies! pardon the prayer that asks, how humbly, how fervently, for his — for my husband's happiness!"

CHAPTER IX.

A FIRST NIGHT.

It is a fearful stake the poet casts,
When he comes forth from his sweet solitude
Of hopes, and songs, and visionary things,
To ask the iron verdict of the world.
Till then his home has been in fairyland,
Sheltered in the sweet depths of his own heart;
But the strong need of praise impels him forth;
For never was there poet but he craved
The golden sunshine of secure renown.
That sympathy which is the life of fame,
It is full dearly bought: henceforth he lives
Feverish and anxious, in an unkind world,
That only gives the laurel to the grave.

NORBOURNE was glad when he found himself in the open air, and with an object before him in which he was keenly interested. It is the mind ill at ease that seeks for excitement, and Courtenaye found in himself a craving for any amusement that, even for a short time, carried

him away from the bitter and busy world within. But now he had a better motive than the mere desire of amusement — he was most anxious for Maynard's success. One of the first things he had done in London, was to find Walter — not a very easy task. Walter shrank from his society with the sensitiveness that belongs to pride and poverty. But Courtenaye would not allow his advances to be rejected ; he interested himself in the other's pursuits, and foresaw their future fame. No poet could reject a friend who was also a prophet, and of his own success.

Norbourne was punctual to his appointment ; but Maynard was there before him. He found him pacing the little sanded parlour of the tavern appointed for the place of meeting, with irregular and hasty steps : his slight frame quivered with uncontrollable emotion, and his face was absolutely white with agitation. He took Norbourne's hand in silence, and they had walked the length of several streets before he found voice to thank him for coming. When he arrived at the door of the theatre

he made a pause, and then, reminding his companion of his promise to join him, he ran in as if life and death were on his speed. Norbourne went round to the front of the house, where every thing promised well. There was a brilliant audience—rank, beauty, and wit—while he went from box to box, doing his utmost to predispose the listeners in the author's favour. As he looked round the house, he could not but feel that the triumph was well worth the risk: the mastery over human emotion had never before appeared to him so glorious. In another hour the hopes and the recollections, the thoughts and the feelings, the most generous aspirations and the tenderest sympathies of our nature, would be stirred, and by what? The noble creation of one gifted and inspired mind!

The overture was almost at a close; and silence being now more effective than any thing that he could urge in favour of the play, Courtenaye went behind the scenes: never had the contrast struck him so forcibly. Before the curtain all was light and brilliancy;

beautiful faces appeared with every advantage of dress and situation ; placed at their side was the graceful and perfumed cavalier, with flatteries as light as the wave of the fan, that half chided, half encouraged them. Scattered amid the glittering crowd were men whose empire was that at which the youthful author aimed — the empire of the mind. All before the curtain was poetry in its most brilliant, and yet most tangible shape ; but behind came the reality — cold, dark, and forbidding. Norbourne felt his enthusiasm suddenly extinguished ; he looked with absolute loathing on the scene around him ; so gloomy, and yet so common. Actors and actresses appeared alike exaggerated and tawdry, and he marvelled what could be the attraction of an existence which seemed divested as much of comfort as of dignity.

Just as these thoughts were passing before him, his attention was drawn to Booth, who, to solve a trifling disagreement between him and the author as to the effect which was to be given to a particular passage, began to

declaim the speech in question. Courtenaye was at once carried out of himself; he caught the fire of the actor; the splendid voice, the noble gesture, and the exalted sentiment, aided by the pomp of the verse, mastered his inmost soul. He was again under the influence of genius,—that influence so subtle and so intense, conquering alike time, place, and circumstance.

He was next struck by the alteration in Walter. His cheek was flushed crimson, his eyes flashed, and he seemed in the wildest spirits; for every actor he had his jest, and for every actress his compliment. He scarcely appeared to heed what was doing on the stage; perhaps Norbourne was the only one who noticed the convulsive movement of the bitten lip, or the slight shudder which shook him at any unexpected sound. As to Norbourne himself, he tried in vain to speak; leant against one of the side-scenes; all he could do was to watch intently the progress, till he almost felt inclined to spring forward and implore the audience to admire. To him it seemed the

most dreadful ordeal to which the human mind could be subjected: all its most precious thoughts brought forward for public scrutiny, perhaps to be misjudged and ridiculed; the labour of months, the hope of a life, to be the sacrifice of a single night; and even he knew not the extent of to-night's importance to the author.

Walter Maynard's fortunes wholly depended on the success of his play. Lintot refused to bring out his poems till the fate of the tragedy was decided; and he well knew that if it failed, the cautious bookseller would decline the publication altogether. A few shillings were all he possessed in the world; and yet there he stood, the light word on his lip, and seemingly far less anxious than his friend. The subject of his play was the fate of Agis, the young and heroic King of Sparta: it gave the ideal of patriotism, relieved by the tenderness of sorrow, and the fidelity of love. It is curious to note how much an author throws himself into his creations: there are his passions, his feelings, and his thoughts. He only models his hero by

imagining what himself would do in a similar situation. Agis was Walter Maynard; brave, high-minded, devoted, and full of the noblest plans for his country and his kind; and yet with a certain vein of irresolution growing out of theories too fine for reducing into practice. But, in considering an author and his works as one, a sufficient distinction is not drawn between the ideal and the real: the last is only given by being past through the crucible of the first. He does not give the events of his life; but the deductions that have been drawn from those events. It is not that he has been placed in the circumstances that he paints; but a quick intuition born of quick feeling, and that power of observation, which is the first requisite in a poet, enable him to bestow actual life to his breathing pictures: while this life is necessarily coloured by the sentiments and the emotions of the giver.

Every thing now depended on the death of Agis, whether it would take due hold on the sympathies of the audience. Courtenaye augured well from the profound silence; sud-

denly a burst of applause shook the house, the curtain had fallen, and Booth sprang to Walter's side, who was still engaged in an animated flirtation with an actress who was to play in the afterpiece.

“ We have carried every thing before us ! ” exclaimed he : “ I died in splendid style. And now, for supper ; I will drink to the liberties of Sparta in nothing less than champagne to-night ! I have done wonders for you : I am sure that no one who saw Agis to-night could say that ‘ Sparta has many a worthier son than he ! ’ I was first-rate ! ”

“ I congratulate you ! ” was what Courtenaye, as he shook hands with the successful author, tried to say ; but he felt that his words were inaudible. At first he could only look his joy ; but he was singularly struck with Walter's appearance : the flush of forced spirits had sunk in the presence of his great emotion, and his face was as the face of death.

A dark presentiment sprang up in Norbourne's mind, and a sad pity mingled with his rejoicing. He seemed fascinated by the

large lustrous eyes, whose light was not of this world — so unearthly, so wild, was at that moment the expression of Walter's countenance. "He is dying!" sounded like a voice in Norbourne's ears: he tried to shake off what he termed a vain and foolish fear, but it clung to him like an omen. He looked again, and the colour had returned to Maynard's lips, the shadow of the grave had passed away; but Courtenaye still seemed to hear within himself a solemn and fated voice repeat, "He is dying!"

CHAPTER X.

SUCCESS.

All things are symbols ; and we find
 In morning's lovely prime,
The actual history of the mind
 In its own early time :
So, to the youthful poet's gaze,
 A thousand colours rise,—
The beautiful which soon decays,
 The buoyant which soon dies.

So does not die their influence,
 The spirit owns the spell ;
Memory to him is music—hence
 The magic of his shell.
He sings of general hopes and fears —
 A universal tone ;
All weep with him, for in his tears
 They recognise their own.

Yet many a one, whose lute hangs now
 High on the laurel tree,
Feels that the cypress' dark bough
 A fitter meed would be :

And still with weariness and wo
The fatal gift is won ;
Many a radiant head lies low,
Ere half its race be run.

THE group of Maynard's friends that gathered round him, only waited till Booth had changed his dress to adjourn to a neighbouring tavern for supper. The excitement needed wine and mirth to carry it off. Suppers were the *ne plus ultra* of human invention; it could go no further, and was obliged to degenerate; dinner is too much matter of business, it is a necessity: now, a necessity is too like a duty ever to be pleasant. Besides, it divides the day instead of winding it up. I do not think, moreover, that people were ever meant to enjoy themselves in the day time. Day belongs to the earthlier deities — the stern, the harsh, and the cold. Gnomes are the spirits of daily hours. Toil, thought, and strife, beset us: we have to work, to quarrel, and to struggle: we have to take our neighbours in; or, at least, to avoid their doing so by us. We are false, designing, and cautious; for, after all, the

doom of Ishmael is the doom of the whole race of men. His hand against every one, and every one's hand against him. Talk of general benevolence and philanthropy — nonsense! We all in our hearts hate each other; and good cause have we for so doing. But night comes in with a more genial spirit: we have done our worst and our bitterest; and we need a small space to indulge any little bit of cordiality that may be left in us. A thousand gay phantasms float in on the sunny south, which has left the far-off vineyards of its birth. The taverns of our ancestors would ill bear contrasting with the clubs of to-day; but many a gay midnight was past in the former:—midnights, whose mirth has descended even to us; half the jests, whose gaiety is still contagious; half the epigrams, whose point is yet felt, were born of those brief and brilliant hours. Such a supper, and such a party, were now waiting to adjourn to a tavern near the theatre.

While they loitered till Booth doffed his theatrical costume, Norbourne's attention was attracted by the young actress to whom May-

nard had been talking; she was looking earnestly at him, and he felt sure that he had seen her face before. Catching his eye, she smiled; and, approaching him, said,—

“So, Mr. Norbourne does not choose to remember an old friend.”

He started, for the voice was as familiar as the face.

“Lavinia Fenton!” exclaimed he, — “impossible!”

“Not at all impossible,” replied the girl; “you know I never liked the country. I had a soul above plaiting cap borders, and picking out false stitches in my lady’s embroidery; so, finding that there was no chance of coming to London—you false-hearted man!—with you and my young lady, in a coach and four, I tried if a cart would not do as well.”

There was something in this abrupt allusion to the treasured and hidden past, that at once shocked and silenced Norbourne. He was annoyed to find that his heart’s sweetest secret was in the possession of one so little likely to keep it; and who, from the very

position in which he found her, would, probably, only consider it as matter for a coarse jest.

“ How, in the name of all that is wonderful, do I find you here ? ” asked he, less from any curiosity, than feeling it a necessity to say something.

“ Why, luck’s all in this world, ” replied she. “ A company of strolling players asked leave to play in our barn ; I learnt more of the world in a week than I had in all my life before. At the week’s end the barn was vacant, and my place also. The Romeo of the company told me that I had the finest eyes in the world. I had myself long suspected the fact ; and, after thinking Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, I set off on the Monday to see what they would do for me here ; and, I must say, they have done their duty. At present I have only a soubrette’s part, with an apron and pockets, and a ballad ; but, as I said before, luck’s all in this world, and I have every requisite for being lucky. I have a handsome face, a good voice, I care for nothing and nobody ; and

when I am a duchess, which I have quite set my mind on being, I will be very grateful to you for having patronised my first benefit, which I shall rely upon your doing."

Half of this voluble discourse was lost upon Norbourne; it seemed as if, within the last few days, he was fated to be haunted by the image of Ethel Churchill: he could not resist making an inquiry. He glanced around, no one was attending; and, in a hurried and agitated tone, he whispered,—"For God's sake, do tell me something of Ethel—Miss Churchill, I mean?"

The girl looked at him earnestly and gravely,—even reproachfully; but there was something in the true emotion of his manner that apparently touched her.

"Mr. Courtenaye," answered she, in a voice even more guarded than his own, "I can tell you nothing that will, that ought to give you any satisfaction. It is a miserable vanity which delights in the affection it only sought to betray. I know how you sought to win that of my young mistress. Heaven is my

witness, that I would not have left her could my stay have been either benefit or comfort. But Ethel Churchill's is no temper to soothe itself with words. She suffers in silence; and light and darkness are not more opposed than our natures,—there never was sympathy between us; but I do pity her. You would scarcely know her again, she is so altered; there she mopes about the house, she who used to be the life of us all. When with her grandmother, she does try and get up her spirits a little; but when out of her sight, she will sit, and not speak a word for hours. This, Mr. Courtenaye, is your doing."

The loud ringing of the prompter's bell made her spring suddenly away; and two of his companions, each taking an arm, hurried him away also. How glad would he have been to have left the party: his thoughts were in a tumult; duties and inclinations warred together—nay, his very sense of right was confounded. To see Ethel once more, to kneel at her feet, to accuse himself, and to implore her pardon, mingled indistinctly in his resolves.

The scene before him seemed strangely confused ; he heard nothing of what was going on, he was either silent, or his answers were wide of the mark. All at once his mood changed : he sought in his champagne glass for forgetfulness,—for that he was too excited ; but it brought a wild and desperate gaiety,—his laugh was the loudest, his jest the readiest, and none did such deep justice to every toast : but within was the quick, aching sense of misery.

It is a strange thing, but so it is, that very brilliant spirits are almost always the result of mental suffering, like the fever produced by a wound. I sometimes doubt tears, I oftener doubt lamentations ; but I never yet doubt the existence of that misery which flushes the cheek and kindles the eye, and which makes the lip mock, with sparkling words, the dark and hidden world within.

There is something in intense suffering that seeks concealment, something that is fain to belie itself. In Cooper's novel of the " Bravo," Jacques conceals himself and his boat, by lying where the moonlight fell dazzling on the water.

We do the same with any great despair, we shroud it in a glittering atmosphere of smiles and jests; but the smiles are sneers, and the jests are sarcasms. There is always a vein of bitterness runs through these feverish spirits, they are the very delirium of sorrow seeking to escape from itself, and which cannot. Suspense and agony are hidden by the moonshine.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PAST.

Weep for the love that fate forbids ;
 Yet loves, unhoping, on,
Though every light that once illumed
 Its early path be gone.

Weep for the love that must resign
 The soul's enchanted dream,
And float, like some neglected bark,
 Adown life's lonely stream !

Weep for the love that cannot change ;
 Like some unholy spell,
It hangs upon the life that loved
 So vainly and so well.

Weep for the weary heart condemned
 To one long, lonely sigh,
Whose lot has been in this cold world,
 To dream, despair, and die !

It is a mystery how fate sometimes answers
to our secret wishes. All night one thought
made Norbourne's pillow restless, and formed

part of every troubled dream. He rose, and it was easy to carry it into execution. The day before, his departure from London would have excited the greatest surprise. This morning, the first thing he saw was a letter from his mother, urging his immediate presence at Courtenaye Hall, on account of some pressing business, owing to a lawsuit having just terminated in their favour.

In his journey down, he must pass within twenty miles of Ethel Churchill's home. He at once resolved that he would see her; it was but to implore her forgiveness, and even Constance might forgive the wish. He hurried off, allowing himself no time to think; and the rapid motion and violent exercise produced their usual effect. The fever of the body triumphed over that of the mind; if not forgotten, it was, at least, lulled.

Late at night, he arrived at a little village about two miles from Mrs. Churchill's house. It required all the influence of his handsome face with the landlady, and his handsome purse with the landlord, to procure those three great

requisites for a traveller — admittance, supper, and a bed. Completely wearied out, he retired to rest, and did not waken the following morning till later than he intended. Remembering Ethel's habit of walking before breakfast in the little plantation adjoining the house, he hurried his toilet, in a hope, which he scarcely acknowledged to himself, of meeting her there. He amazed the pretty hostess by refusing breakfast; however, flinging down double the amount of her already unconscionable bill, consoled her for his want of appetite. This done, he sprung on his horse, which he urged to the utmost speed till he came to the once well-known gate, which was the side entrance to the plantation. There he fastened his horse, and, flinging his cloak over the panting creature, entered the little wood.

It was just the beginning of spring; only a few of the trees had as yet ventured to put forth the scarce unfolded leaves; there was the promise of green, rather than the green itself, and that soft yellow, which has the bloom of a flower before the flowers themselves.

The gray boughs of the oak were still bare ; and the hollies were fresh and bright, though their scarlet berries and Christmas had passed away together. As yet, the banks were uncovered by the various creeping plants, which in June were so luxurious ; but the maiden's hair flung down its long green tresses, and every sunny nook had its group of primroses—the primrose, which is spring's second herald.

It is curious to note how gradually the flowers warm into the rich colours and aromatic breath of summer. First, comes the snow-drop, formed from the snows, which give it name ; fair, but cold and scentless : then comes the primrose, with its faint soft hues, and its faint soft perfume—an allegory of actual existence, where the tenderest and most fragile natures are often those selected to bear the coldest weather, and the most bleak exposure. This is fanciful ; but the whole place was thronged with “ fast coming fancies,” so fairy-like were the shadows that fell from the pensile branches, so changeful the golden lights that glimmered on the scarcely budding boughs.

Norbourne felt the influence of the lovely hour and scene. Every step he took brought with it some gentle recollection; for a few moments he wandered on, lost in a delicious reverie. But the past only brought the present more vividly before him — he started! for the first time, the folly and the error he was committing seemed to strike forcibly upon his mind. He turned pale, and leant, breathless, against an oak beside. What could he say to Ethel when he saw her? — he had no excuse that he might offer for his falsehood: what could he say? — nothing! What right had he, the husband of another, to offer Miss Churchill vain regrets, which to her were only insults? and Constance, his sweet, his devoted Constance, she who had not a wish, nor a thought, but what were his own — how could he justify his conduct to her? That she might never know, was nothing. To his own heart he could not answer his meditated treachery; for treachery it was to tell another how much he grieved over an union in which she, at least, was wholly blameless. The tumult and

excitement of his soul softened in the sacred presence of nature. He felt that he owed it alike both to Ethel and to Constance, to abandon his intended purpose.

“ Yet once again,” exclaimed he, passionately, “ let me gaze on that beautiful and beloved face! let me see if sorrow has cast a shadow on its surpassing loveliness! I will not let her know how near I am, and how wretched! No, in secret and in silence will I look upon her once more ; and then, farewell for ever !”

Only those who know what it is to give up some cherished wish just on its very verge of fulfilment, and give up from that sense of right which it is hard to deny, and yet harder to execute — only they can tell what it cost Norbourne to give up his purpose of seeing Ethel : yet he did give it up ; and advanced only with the hope of one distant look, relying on his knowledge of the various little paths to escape through the wood if any one came too near. At length, he stopped within the shelter of a large spreading arbutus, it was too near

the house to advance further; but, though sheltered himself, he could see all the once familiar objects. There was the little fountain, the grass-plot, and the summer-house. There they were as of old — they, at least, were the same. He welcomed them as old familiar friends; but, when he glanced around, the symptoms of change were on them as well. Then the pale hues of autumn were around; now, every thing was colouring with spring. He looked, but in vain, for the blue harebells beside the little fountain; they were gone, and with them, how much of hope and of affection had gone too! His heart beat, till he leant breathless on one of the spreading boughs. At that moment, he saw a figure move in the summer-house: it came towards the door: it was Ethel. At first, he only saw the face — it was pale, sad; but there was a change even beyond that unwonted paleness. Gradually his eye took in her whole appearance. Early as it was, she was splendidly dressed. Her golden hair glittered with gems in the light of the morning; her robe was of white

damask, flowered with silver ; and a long white veil was half folded round her.

Norbourne had not courage to even think the surmise that, in spite of himself, would arise. At that moment he saw Mrs. Churchill, attended by a gentleman, both richly attired, come from the house. They advanced to the summer-house, and the cavalier approached Ethel, who still stood in her pensive and abstracted attitude, as if to lead her away. Slowly and reluctantly as it seemed, she let him take her hand ; slowly and reluctantly, but she let him take it. The three returned to the house ; and Norbourne could see that there were many guests assembled.

“ Let me know the worst ! ” exclaimed he, rushing with frantic violence from the spot. He hurried through the wood, and sprang upon his horse, intending to gallop to the village, and ask about the family. He had not far to go ; for he had scarcely gained the road before he met a party of peasants, dressed in their Sunday attire. One question was enough : an elderly woman answered him ; “ Yes, please

your honour, we are going to see Miss Ethel married to a grand gentleman from foreign parts." Norbourne asked no more ; but, putting spurs to the horse, he galloped across the common, as if life and death had been upon his speed.

CHAPTER XII.

GOSSIPING.

These are the spiders of society;
They weave their petty webs of lies and sneers,
And lie themselves in ambush for the spoil.
The web seems fair, and glitters in the sun,
And the poor victim winds him in the toil
Before he dreams of danger, or of death.
Alas, the misery that such inflict!
A word, a look, have power to wring the heart,
And leave it struggling hopeless in the net
Spread by the false and cruel, who delight
In the ingenious torment they contrive.

A WOMAN'S character is developed by the affections: when once they come into action, how rapidly are the latent qualities called forth, and in how brief a time what a wonderful change is wrought! This process, rapid in all her sex, was unusually rapid in Constance. The bitter fruit of her experience had, like

the bean-plant in the fairy tale, grown up in a single night. Guileless, confiding, and affectionate, she was a child in every thing but years when she married her cousin. Till then she knew naught of the world but from books, books that teach so much, and yet so little. A few weeks sufficed to work an amazing alteration: timid and subdued, the difference appeared little on the surface, but it worked not less certainly below. With all her advantages of birth, station, and wealth, it was impossible but that she must excite some degree of envy; and, alas! for human nature, envy will always delight in inflicting mortification.

Many were the disparaging remarks that reached, as they were intended to do, the ear of their victim. On one less sensitive, and more accustomed to the malice which, of all others, seems the vice society peculiarly engenders, they would have fallen comparatively harmless; but with Constance they struck to the heart. She had been so happy in the idea of Norbourne's attachment, that the doubt

was dreadful. This disposition was encouraged by many casual expressions respecting Lady Marchmont, and by some, also, that were intentional. Among others, there was a Lady Dudley, a family connexion of her own, who having perceived Mrs. Courtenaye's jealousy (for poor Constance was but little accustomed to dissemble), did her very best to encourage it.

Lady Dudley was just such a being as is formed by an entire existence amid those

“Thick solitudes,
Called social, where all vice and hatred are.”

Her youth had passed in intrigues and vanities, and she still lived among them at second-hand : she now talked what she formerly did. Lady Marchmont was an object of her especial dislike ; she feared her wit, and could not forgive her youth and beauty. Moreover, there was an interest in any *ou dit* about one so much the rage ; her looks, laces, and sayings, were equally invaluable as matters of gossip. Moreover, Lady Dudley flattered herself with filling the next best part to the principal, that of

confidante with Mrs. Courtenaye. Constance had, however, too much good taste, as well as good feeling, for this; she had betrayed her jealousy, not confessed it. Still, this was enough for her *soi-disant* friend, who went on torturing her with stories about Lady Marchmont's powers of fascination, and Lady Marchmont's coquetry.

“ You do not know,” said she, after a long visit, which left Constance pale as a statue, her lip feverish with anxiety, and eyes filled with tears which she would not shed: “ you do not know what a dangerous person Lady Marchmont is! I should not, my sweet young friend, warn you so much against her, but that I take the deepest interest in your happiness!”

“ You are too kind!” sighed Constance.

“ You know your husband is a very young man, and a very handsome one — beauty is a dangerous gift!”

“ Would I could try its danger!” thought Mrs. Courtenaye, as she caught her own wan and languid countenance in the opposite glance.

“ Now, all men are vain, quite as vain as we are ; indeed, I always say much more so,” continued her tormentor ; “ and Mr. Courtenaye’s vanity must be flattered by Lady Marchmont’s admiration !”

“ Do you think she admires him, then ?” asked his wife, in a startled tone.

“ Oh, I say nothing,” replied Lady Dudley, with a sneer ; “ but we all know that Lady Marchmont would fain lead captive every man about town worth looking at. They say that she applied to her conquests the answer of the French actress, who, being asked if she could reckon up her lovers, replied, ‘ *Oui, qui ne sçait compter jusqu’au mille ?* ’ ”

“ She is very lovely !” said Constance, mournfully.

“ Oh, there are others as handsome as she is !” interrupted her ladyship ; “ but she is such a coquette—quite heartless ; and, therefore, the more dangerous. Her passion is universal admiration ; and she cares for nothing, so long as her vanity is but gratified : of course, I speak to you in complete confidence. Good by, my

dearest Mrs. Courtenaye ; I say to you what I would not say to any one else for the world !”

So saying, she hurried off, impatient to say precisely the same thing to some fifty or more dearest friends. Just as she left the room, but in time to receive the warmest reception, and a “ How charming, my love, you look to-day !” Lady Marchmont made her appearance.

“ Ah !” exclaimed she, “ I should know that Lady Dudley had been your visitor, you look so weary. There, I will be very good, and allow you five minutes to recover yourself.”

“ I am not very well to-day,” said Constance, rising to receive her ; “ I have a head-ach.” What would women do, if headachs were abolished ? They are the universal feminine resource.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONFIDENCE.

She had that charming laugh which, like a song,
The song of a spring-bird, wakes suddenly
When we least look for it. It lingered long
Upon the ear, one of the sweet things we
Treasure unconsciously. As steals along
A stream in sunshine, stole its melody,
As musical as it was light and wild,
The buoyant spirit of some fairy child ;
Yet mingled with soft sighs, that might express
The depth and truth of earnest tenderness.

HENRIETTA took a seat, and soon began a lively conversation ; but it is impossible to go on talking, if your listener either cannot or will not answer. Suddenly it struck her visitor that Mrs. Courtenaye had a lurking remembrance of her cold manner to Norbourne on the day of Mrs. Howard's *fête*.

“ It was foolish of me,” thought she, “ I had no right to mark resentment.”

With the view of doing this away, she began to make inquiries after Mr. Courtenaye.

“ I see that you are too good a wife to be tempted into gaiety during your husband’s absence ; but when he returns, I must persuade you to come and dine with us.”

Constance rose from her seat ; and, after two or three hurried turns up and down the room, came and sat down by Lady Marchmont, who noted her obvious agitation with both surprise and sympathy.

“ You must forgive me,” exclaimed she, in a hurried and distressed manner, unable longer to suppress the tears that fell in large slow drops, still half kept back ; “ but I cannot look upon you and not feel my own wretchedness. I do not wonder that Norbourne loved you !”

“ Loved me !” exclaimed Henrietta, too much astonished to say more.

“ I know not,” continued Constance, passionately, “ what parted you, but you cannot

blame me ; I knew it not. I thought, oh, vain folly ! that it was me he loved. Why else did he marry me ? But I feel now, oh, how bitterly ! that I was not worthy of him. I, without beauty, grace—with nothing but a heart, whose deep love he will never know !”

She hid her face in her hands ; the hysterical passion of tears, long subdued, now burst forth, and she wept bitterly, while Henrietta exhausted every effort to soothe her.

“ You pity me !” at last exclaimed Constance ; “ will you not then leave to me the little that my unwearied affection may gain of his heart ? You, so beautiful, so flattered, cannot know what it is not to have a hope or a fear but what is bound up in one beloved object ! Tell me,” and she knelt at Henrietta’s feet, “ that you will not seek to win him again from me ?”

“ There is some strange mistake here,” said Lady Marchmont, deeply touched at the emotion she witnessed : “ you speak as if some affection existed between Mr. Courtenaye and myself ; I am sure that we are equally ignorant

of it: but I hate mysteries, they are often miserable, and always mischievous; do tell me what you mean? Believe me that your present unhappiness originates in some misapprehension!"

"Were you never," faltered Constance, "engaged, or attached to Norbourne?"

"Me!" cried Lady Marchmont; "I never knew him till after my own marriage, and then very slightly. I know not how this strange fancy originated, but it has not the shadow of a foundation. Come, tell me candidly, what could have put it in your head?"

"I will," said Constance, who felt intuitively that Lady Marchmont spoke the truth: "I thought that there was something very peculiar in your manner at Mrs. Howard's *fête*; and Lady Dudley ——"

"Say no more," interrupted Henrietta; "the very mention of that inveterate gossip accounts for every thing. Do let me, my dear Mrs. Courtenaye," and she took her hand with a kindness that was irresistible, "let me warn you against allowing your happiness to be the

sport of a woman like that; one who would not care what misery she caused, if it gave her one moment's importance, or one moment's amusement. Use your own judgment with reference to what she is!"

"I own," replied Constance, "that I certainly neither like nor respect her."

"Why then allow her to influence you?" asked her companion.

"I was wrong, very wrong," returned the other; "but she seemed kind to me, and — and I sometimes feel so lonely. I am not strong enough to go out much, and the days are very long here: in the country I had my birds and my flowers, and there were many who loved me. They were not, it is true, companions, but I returned home happier after visiting our cottages, where so many faces grew brighter to welcome mine; but in this vast place every thing is so strange and so cold, and I pass very many long and lonely hours, and pass them, perhaps, in nursing foolish fancies."

There was something in this picture that keenly touched Lady Marchmont; she, too, brilliant as her lot appeared, had many long and lonely hours — hours that craved for confidence and affection.

“ Let us be friends,” exclaimed she, with a sweet earnestness; “ we shall do each other good. I grow too selfish, living only among the cold, the vain, and the flattering; while you grow too sensitive, living too much amid your fancies and feelings.”

Constance answered by taking the hands so frankly offered, and pressing them in her own, while Lady Marchmont continued :—

“ I will tell you all my faults frankly beforehand. I am very vain, for I cultivate my vanity on a principle, and cannot understand why we should neglect such a source of gratification. I take all the admiration I can on the same principle that kings take taxes: I look upon it as my right. They will tell you that I am a coquette, but it is not true; I do not care enough about people;

besides, I am too impetuous, and too frank. Moreover, my opinions on love are romantic and peculiar; I never talk about them. I am a bad temper, but you will like me all the better from having occasionally to make up a quarrel with me:—And now, shall we be friends?”

“I shall only love you too much,” said Constance.

“Oh, that is a fault I shall readily overlook!” replied Henrietta, laughing, as she rose to depart; and fast friends they were from that time. Constance found a resource in the gaiety of Lady Marchmont, and learnt from her something of more self-reliance, and a more accurate idea of the world in which she was to live. She daily became more attached to her: she saw her faults, though of a different kind to those Lady Marchmont herself confessed; but she loved her in despite of them; nor did the young countess attach herself less to her gentle friend. Henrietta was of a much more affectionate temper than she would have

confessed even to herself: she delighted in the pleasure which she gave; and, evening after evening would she sit with Constance, who was quite incapable of further exertion.

CHAPTER XIV.

UNAVAILING REGRET.

Farewell! and when the charm of change
Has sunk, as all must sink, in shade ;
When joy, a wearied bird, begins
The wing to droop, the plume to fade ;

When thou thyself, at length, hast felt
What thou hast made another feel—
The hope that sickens to despair,
The wound that time may sear, not heal ;

When thou shalt pine for some fond heart
To beat in answering thine again ;—
Then, false one, think once more on me,
And sigh to think it is in vain.

It was Ethel Churchill, dressed as a bride, and on her wedding morning, that Norbourne had seen. She had sought the summer-house for a few moments of quiet and solitude. There was a dead weight on her spirits, which she rather sought to indulge than to shake off.

The torpor had succeeded to the violence of grief; nothing now seemed to interest her. All that constitutes youth had suddenly passed away: she looked forward to nothing, because it appeared to her experience, that to hope and to trust was to insure disappointment and deceit. Ethel actually shrank from the idea of happiness: she had been so happy once; and how dearly had that happiness avenged its brief and sweet presence! Gradually she had sunk into that worst state of misery, and one which in a woman it so frequently assumes; namely, a state of languid and listless dejection. Every thing was a trouble, and nothing a pleasure; while one day passed on into another — dull, monotonous, without an effort to rouse from her utter depression.

One evening she was startled from the gloomy reverie in which it had grown her habit to indulge during the family histories, which were perpetual subjects of her grandmother's discourse, by the announcement that a visitor was expected the following day: — "One, Ethel," said the old lady, with a very significant look,

“ in whom I expect you to take a most peculiar interest.”

Ethel shook her head, but said nothing ; but her grandmother, who wished to be questioned, went on, as if it were a token of assent.

“ And a very handsome young man he is. Perhaps, child, I ought not to say any thing about it ; but I have never kept you back like most young women.”

Ethel, by the by, had never, in the whole course of her life, ventured on offering an opinion in her grandmother's presence.

“ Besides, as I wish you to look your best, I may as well tell you, that Mr. Trevanion is coming here to fulfil his part in the contract of marriage which passed between your parents when you were both children.”

Certainly Mrs. Churchill's plan, for her granddaughter to look the best, was any thing but efficacious, in the first instance ; for Ethel sank back, pale, and almost fainting.

“ Why, what is the matter with the child ?” exclaimed the old lady ; “ there is nothing so very

dreadful in a lover ; but I shall leave you to find that out when he comes."

" You do not mean," cried Ethel, frightened into speaking, " to insist on my fulfilling a contract of which I never heard. Only let me live on quietly with you — I never mean to marry."

" Very proper to say so," returned Mrs. Churchill, with an air of calm approval ; " young ladies ought never to consent till they are asked."

" But when I am asked," said Ethel, more impetuously than she had ever said any thing in her life before, " I have only a refusal to give."

" Very right that you should say so now," replied her grandmother ; " but let me caution you against taking any foolish fancies into your head, as if you could be allowed the same choice in a husband that you are in a riband."

" I cannot, will not marry him !" sobbed Ethel.

" Do not, my dear child, talk nonsense. You are not aware of the important inter-

ests involved in your marriage. Our wealth and our connexions are of importance to our party. In a few months, I hope that Mr. Trevanion will be able to assume the title so long in his family, of the Earl of Lanriggon. I tell you, in strict confidence, that King James has already affixed his royal seal to the patent. But these are no matters for you: go and gather some roses for me, and try to bring in some on your cheek, as well as in your hand.

CHAPTER XV.

Why, what a history is on the rose!
A history beyond all other flowers;
But never more, in garden or in grove,
Will the white queen reign paramount again.
She must content her with remembered things,
When her pale leaves were badge for knight and earl;
Pledge of a loyalty which was as pure,
As free from stain, as those white depths her leaves
Unfolded to the earliest breath of June.

MRS. CHURCHILL belonged to a class now completely passed away. The material of the species still remains; but the form under which it exhibits is different. She had the reputation of being learned; and a little learning went a great way in her time. Had she lived now, she would have talked of the last delightful lecture on gas, or the charming new treatise on carbonic acid; she would have studied German, and delighted in the society

of "talented people." As it was, she knew some of the Latin names for plants in the herbal. She piqued herself on giving advice, and said very severe things; she also wrote very long letters, and was a warm partisan of the exiled Stuarts. Kind-hearted and well-meaning, she was narrow-minded and rigid, only because she thought it beneath the dignity of a sensible woman to change her mind. Ethel knew that, having once announced her marriage, it would be impossible to alter her grandmother's determination; and it was an awful thing to venture on open opposition to one, whose will had been hitherto blindly obeyed. But Ethel was young and romantic: she resolved to throw herself on the generosity of the coming lover; and felt entirely assured that he must think the heart valueless, that had been, that was but too much still, the property of another. This resolve once taken, she prepared to wait patiently the proper time for carrying it into execution; and was again sad and languid as before.

Mr. Trevanion arrived: he was a tall,

slight, and, certainly, a handsome young man, and perfectly aware of whatever advantages he possessed. He had lived chiefly abroad ; and if any thing in England satisfied him, it was the satisfaction of abusing every thing. With Mrs. Churchill he soon became a first-rate favourite. His head was quite turned with mysteries, secret correspondences, and plots : he met her on her own weak point. Both delighted to hear themselves talk, and both talking themselves out of all rationality ; for words, like wine, get up into the head : they passed hours in conversational conspiracies, till both the old woman and the young man believed that the house of Hanover only waited their impetus to tremble to its downfall.

Ethel found that it was not so easy to make her intended disclosure ; for when she attempted to speak to Mr. Trevanion, she was overwhelmed with such a flood of flowery eloquence, that she was dismayed into silence. The time grew terribly near ; and courage has oftener despair for its mother than any other parent. She seized an opportunity when he was walking

up and down the terrace — in his own mind the very personification of Shakspeare's comet,

“ Perplexing monarchs, with the fear of change,”

to walk also, and meet him. Of course, his political meditations were put to flight by her appearance. He requested permission to join her, and was soon eloquent in the description of the last *fête* that he had witnessed at Versailles.

Mr. Trevanion was one of those talkers, who are too much engrossed with their own subject matter to have much attention to bestow elsewhere; with them silence is attention. Ethel's wandering eye, and lip, tremulous with its effort to speak, would never have attracted his notice. To his utter astonishment, she interrupted a parenthesis, as brilliant as the rocket which it depicted, by saying,—

“ Mr. Trevanion, I do not know what you will think of my boldness, but I must speak to you.”

“ Speak,” said the gentleman, with a

theatrical air; "and I will ask no other music."

Agitated, blushing, and in a voice scarcely audible at first, she began her confession. Gradually the strong emotion prevailed over the weaker one, and timidity was merged in feelings that grew more powerful as she proceeded.

"I have now told you all; forgive and pity me. I ask of yourself, how could I do otherwise than decline an engagement, when I have no heart to bestow?" The tears filled her dark blue eyes; never had she felt the shame and wretchedness of her position so forcibly before. "May I ask of you," continued she, in faltering tones, "to tell my grandmother, that our engagement is broken off?"

"Well, certainly," exclaimed Mr. Trevanion, "this is the most charming piece of *bergerie* it has ever been my good fortune to witness."

Ethel looked at him in blank amazement, while he went on.

“ Indeed, my sweet Miss Churchill, I cannot be sufficiently grateful. Between ourselves, the country is rather *triste*, and you have given me positively a sensation ; yet my forte is not the Arcadian : however, I will do my *petit possible* to console you for the loss of *le beau Lindor*, who was my predecessor.”

“ Sir,” said Ethel, “ I do not understand you.”

“ Very probably not ! — charming ignorance !” replied Mr. Trevanion, with a patronising expression. “ A few weeks in Paris will soon give you a little knowledge of the world ; but the effect of your first simplicity will be delicious. Ah, there is Mrs. Churchill ! let us join her. I suppose, as I have been playing the part of *confident*, I must not make her laugh over our little romance.”

Ethel was silent from surprise : she had prepared herself for anger — even sorrow ; but ridicule left her without an answer. What could she say to a hearer, who only smiled, and to whom emotion was only a scene in a pastoral ? That night she made an appeal to

her grandmother; but in vain. Mrs. Churchill would have thought that she had sacrificed the cause of the Stuarts to a girl's folly, had she for a moment entertained the idea of dissolving an engagement with Mr. Trevanion. What could Ethel do, but submit? It was not as if she had had any hope in the future to enable her to bear up against the present; but hope she had none, and only hope can inspire resistance.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CHURCH.

The altar, 'tis of death ! for there are laid
The sacrifice of all youth's sweetest hopes.
It is a dreadful thing for woman's lip
To swear the heart away ; yet know that heart
Annuls the vow while speaking, and shrinks back
From the dark future that it dares not face.
The service read above the open grave
Is far less terrible than that which seals
The vow that binds the victim, not the will ;
For in the grave is rest.

SOON — how soon it appeared to come! — the day appointed for Miss Churchill's marriage arrived. With a faint shudder, she looked from her window. The whole garden was bathed in sunshine ; a light wind stirred the branches, which seemed filled with singing birds : she turned away ; the light and the music were painful to her. Who has not felt this exaggeration of the sick heart, which

reproaches inanimate nature with its lack of sympathy, which turns from the golden light of day, from the cheerful sights and sounds that fill the open air with rejoicing, as if the gladness only mocked their misery! Passively, she allowed her grandmother to hurry her toilet, who would not see how wan and ill she looked. When all was complete, she turned away from the glass as she had turned away from the window, with a deeper feeling of desolation. It was a relief to glide away unperceived; and almost mechanically she sought the open air, and entered the summer-house, from the habit of turning her steps thither, rather than from any will on her own part. She was not permitted to remain there long; and Mr. Trevanion, accompanied by Mrs. Churchill, conducted her to the apartment where the guests were assembled.

All the Jacobite gentry of that part of the country were collected together; though, it must be confessed, their appearance and their usual after-dinner conversation were rather at variance. Now they looked calm and

comfortable, with as little the appearance of conspirators as possible; then they were (by their own account) the most oppressed of individuals, and the most devoted of partisans, ready to die, so that their wrongs were redressed, and the rightful king restored. There was a great show of gaiety; for the neighbourhood, being a dull and scattered one, any thing that wore the semblance of festival was doubly welcome.

Again Ethel felt how little sympathy was there with her sadness. A thousand wild plans of escape even now flitted across her mind; but they were vague and confused fancies, which she lacked the energy, even if she had had the power, to execute. A dull sense of suffering weighed upon her heart. She heard voices, she saw faces, but they produced no impression upon her; and she allowed herself to be handed into the carriage, almost without knowing what she did. The long and slow procession, at length, reached the church; and it took up almost as much time to range the different friends in their appointed and proper

places. An old gentleman, a distant, and yet their nearest connexion, led Ethel forward, filled only with the idea of the important situation he himself held, in having to give away the bride. There she stood, her large blue eyes dilated far beyond their usual size, fixed on vacancy. There was not a tinge of colour on a cheek usually so blooming — nay, her very lip had lost its crimson: she looked as white as her dress.

Mrs. Churchill watched her anxiously: perhaps, now that it was too late, she repented having urged the match so peremptorily, as more than one doubt crossed her mind of the future happiness of her gentle and affectionate child. She saw her there — wan, wasted, broken in spirits, — a victim, rather than a bride! but such misgivings were now in vain.

The clergyman had taken his place at the altar, when the attention of the party assembled was attracted to loud and unusual sounds in the churchyard. There was the galloping of horses, the clang of heavy steps and spurs, and the jingle of swords. The sus-

pense was brief; for the next moment an officer, accompanied by a magistrate, with some half-dozen soldiers following, entered the church. In another instant the warrant was produced, and James Trevanion was arrested on a charge of high treason. All now was rage and confusion; and some of the younger among the bridal guests shewed symptoms of resistance.

“Gentlemen,” said the magistrate, calmly, “the door is surrounded by troops: opposition to my disagreeable duty can only bring fatal consequences to yourselves. Remove the prisoner at once. Madam,” continued he, addressing Mrs. Churchill, “I am sorry to say that there are suspicious circumstances in which you are implicated. In consideration of your age and high respectability, I have ventured to take upon myself to answer for you; but, at present, I must request that you will accept the hospitality of my house.

Mr. Trevanion advanced forward; but the magistrate interposed.

“I can feel,” said he, “for a gentleman in

your circumstances ; but it is my duty to see that no communication takes place between yourself and the ladies involved in the suspicion of treasonable practices. Your farewells must be made in my presence.”

And how did Ethel feel?—like a wretch, under sentence of death, who, at the very scaffold, receives a reprieve. She was only alive to the joy of her release : for a moment, she thought of nothing but her own escape.

“ Thank God ! ” exclaimed she, to the utter dismay of the two bridesmaids within hearing ; and, throwing herself on her knees, she hid her face in her hands, and uttered a hurried and passionate thanksgiving.

CHAPTER XVII.

PRESENTIMENT.

I feel the shadow on my brow,
The sickness at my heart;
Alas! I look on those I love,
And am so sad to part.

If I could leave my love behind,
Or watch from yonder sky
With holy and enduring care,
I were not loath to die.

But death is terrible to Love:
And yet a love like mine
Trusts in the heaven from whence it came,
And feels it is divine.

Mrs. COURTENAYE'S house was, that night, the gayest in London. Lord Norbourne wished that the *fête* given by his daughter should be without a rival. He spared no expense, and Lady Marchmont no taste.

“ I see clearly,” said Constance to her, the very morning of her party, “ that society is as much a science as astronomy ; and, also, that, like poetry, one must be born with a genius for it. What should I have done without you ? After once satisfying my anxiety that Norbourne would return in time (he looks sadly fagged with his journey), there seemed to me nothing more to care about.”

“ Why, my dear child, of all the people that you expect, your husband is of the least importance !” replied Henrietta, laughing.

Constance shook her head, and smiled, as she answered,—

“ Give me Norbourne, my father, and yourself, and I should be only too glad to see none beside. A crowd frightens me : I feel so keenly among strangers that there is nothing in me to attract or to please, that I shrink, with sudden fear, back into the little circle who, I hope, will love me for the deep and exceeding love that I bear to them.”

“ I am sure,” exclaimed Lady Marchmont, passing her arm caressingly round Constance’s

neck, “not to love you, would be to have a heart of ice, or no heart at all. But you and I go through life on different principles: you ask of life its affections; I ask its amusements: I like to be admired; you like to be loved: you would tremble at the idea of an enemy; I should only think of one as giving me an opportunity of triumph: I should confide in my success, and feel quite grateful for the victory over them, which, I am sure, I should have.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Mrs. Courtenaye, timidly, “beautiful as you are, gay as you always seem, I never think of you without a sensation of fear—fear for your sake, dear Henrietta!”

“Fear!” replied the other, her dark eyes kindling with haughtier light; “I should like to know the sensation, it would be something quite new!”

“Nay,” interrupted her friend, “so young, every thing must be new to you!”

“I do not know,” returned Lady Marchmont, “whether I am young; I believe that I am, counting my years,—a most uncertain way

of reckoning, by the by,—but I feel very old. I scarcely know any thing that really interests me, and I would give a great deal not to be so quick-sighted as I am; it would be so pleasant to believe only a tithe of the professions that are made me.”

“ It is a dreadful thing to doubt!” returned Constance, sadly: “ I do not know why, but there is something about you that discourages me almost as much as my father’s conversation sometimes does. What is there that nature has not done for you? and yet you are not happy. I have watched you in your most brilliant moments: others went away saying, what charming spirits Lady Marchmont has! but I saw that they were forced.”

“ You are right!” exclaimed Henrietta: “ I so often feel that I am not loved, and not valued as I deserve to be. I carry the coldness of my own hearth about with me; and with the usual exaggeration of self-love, I fancy people must see the dejection under which I often labour: I disdain their pity, and put on a vizard of smiles to ward it off.”

“ Ours is a strange world,” said Constance, in a sad and thoughtful tone ; “ I see little enjoyment, and much misery ; for which, also, I see no remedy : I am often frightened and weary when I think of it. Every day more and more reconciles me to the idea of leaving it. I could lay my head down on my last pillow, and sleep gladly, like a tired child, but for my father.”

“ My dearest Constance,” cried Lady Marchmont, “ I will not let you talk in this dejected mood ; many, many happy years are before you !”

“ It is not a dejected mood, dearest friend,” was the answer ; “ it is one of faith and of hope. God has, for his own good purposes, weaned my heart from a world in which he means me to make but a brief sojourn. Only those destined for an early grave ever felt as I do : I speak not of my bodily health, though that grows weaker every day, but it is my own heart that foretells its doom. It craves for rest and for peace ; here it has beat too quickly, and too vainly.”

“ You, my gentle and timid Constance!” interrupted Henrietta.

“ Ay, for years I lived in the wild worship of an earthly idol! I loved my cousin as those love whom nothing distracts from the one cherished object! I was solitary, neglected, debarred by my health from the ordinary pursuits of my age, but one image supplied the place of all others: I have passed hours thinking of Norbourne, till his own presence was scarcely more actual than my waking dream. I married him; and, for a time, forgot that earth was not heaven! I was too happy; and, as if I were to owe all to him whom I loved so utterly, my marriage gave me a share I never before possessed in my father’s affection; and I found, too, that he was happier for loving me. I forgot all but this life: it shut out eternity. I cannot tell you how I awakened from my dream, for dream it was—so gradual, but so sad was my awakening. Too soon the subtle instinct of love told me that I was not to Norbourne what he was to me!”

“ No woman ever is to a man,” interrupted Lady Marchmont: “ your solitary education has led you to form ethereal fancies that can never be realised. It is impossible to be a more affectionate, or a kinder husband, than Mr. Courtenaye.”

“ He is too kind,” replied Constance, mournfully; “ he feels that he has to make up to me for the heart which I have not. I am punished for having worshipped too entirely an earthly idol: it has not been given to me to make that happiness which I would purchase, ah! how gladly, at the expense of my own! But he loves me not, and he loves another. Why he married me, I know not.”

Lady Marchmont thought that Lord Norbourne’s wealth was a too sufficient reason; but, for worlds, she would not have said so, and Constance continued:—

“ Some might think that the riches of the heiress bought the hand, though it could not buy the heart; but it was not that which made me the wife of Norbourne Courtenaye. I have known him from a boy, generous and

disinterested: others may judge of him even as they themselves would have acted, but I judge him by old and perfect knowledge: but I fear that my father used undue influence; perhaps he appealed to my cousin's pity. Oh, Henrietta! you talked of disdainng pity; I am thankful even for that; but it is a dreadful requital for love!"

She paused in agitated silence, and Henrietta felt that silence and caresses were at first her only answer; but, having soothed her companion into more of composure, she could not but add, "but you are married, and might both be happy yourself, and make your husband's happiness. It is not in any nature, more especially one kind and generous as his, to be insensible to your devotion, or to your many engaging qualities; why dwell on these sad and vain imaginations?"

"They are sad, but not vain," replied Constance; "but for them I should still cling too closely to a world I shall soon leave for ever! I have at last learned to say, 'Not my will, but thine, O Father! be done.' I am

content to think that he will remember me with a tender grief; and how could I bear to dwell for a moment on the agony of sorrow that he must feel, did he love me with a love like mine own, and had to part? It soothes me to feel that he will be spared that bitterest, that terrible despair."

"Do not speak thus," exclaimed Henrietta, her eyes filling with tears as she gazed on the face now so lovely, with its sweet and inspired expression.

"It relieves me," replied Constance, "my spirits were over-burdened. The weakness of our nature subdues us to the last; but the time may come, when, freed from all the bitterness, all the selfishness that belongs unto mortal love, I shall watch over him even as an angel watches, and find my happiness in his, even in another and a better world!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FÊTE.

There was a feast that night,
And coloured lamps sent forth their odorous light
Over gold carvings, and the purple fall
Of tapestry ; and around each stately hall
Were statues pale, and delicate, and fair,
As all of beauty, save her blush, were there ;
And, like light clouds floating around each room,
The censers sent their breathings of perfume ;
And scented waters mingled with the breath
Of flowers that died as they rejoiced in death.
The tulip, with its globe of rainbow light ;
The red rose, as it languished with delight ;
The bride-like hyacinth, drooping as with shame,
And the anemone, whose cheek of flame
Is golden, as it were the flower the sun,
In his noon hour, most loved to look upon.
At first the pillared halls were still and lone,
As if some fairy palace, all unknown
To mortal eye or step :—this was not long—
Wakened the lutes, and rose the sound of song ;
And the wide mirrors glittered with the crowd

Of changing shapes : the young, the fair, the proud,
Came thronging in.

MIDNIGHT brought with it all the world to Lord Norbourn's — at least that portion of it which calls itself the world, to the exclusion of all the rest. His usual good fortune attended him ; and the management of a *fête* requires as much good fortune as any thing else. How many were in that glittering crowd whose names are still familiar to us ! There was the Duchess of Queensberry, who had not as yet cut the king and queen, looking strangely beautiful, and half tempting one to believe in the doctrine of transmigration ; namely, that the soul of the Duchess of Newcastle had transmigrated into the body of the modern peeress. There she was, doing rude things, and saying ruder, which every body bore with the best grace in the world : then, as now, it was perfectly astonishing what people in general will submit to in the way of insolence, provided the said insolence be attended by rank and riches. Near her was the young and beautiful Duchess of Marlborough, wearing

the diamond necklace she had recently purchased with Congreve's legacy—last memorial of the small vanity which had characterised him through life. The money now lavished on the ostentation of a splendid toy, what a blessing would it have been to some one struggling with life's worst difficulties—poverty and pretence!

Lord Peterborough was talking to her,—a man sent into the world to shew that the Amadis could have its prototype in reality; and yet all his heroic qualities dashed with a ridicule, as much as to say, the present age is quite unfit for them. Next came a crowd of young beauties, who shed their own brilliancy around; and near were a group of cavaliers, "fine gentlemen about town," who, whatever else they might doubt, had not a doubt of their own irresistibility. And, crowning glory of the evening! a conquest was made, a conquest so sudden, so brilliant, and so obvious, that it was enough to give any *fête* at which it occurred the immortality of a season.

At Lord Norbourne's express petition, the

beautiful Miss Walpole was allowed to emerge from the seclusion of Houghton, where she had been wasting her sweetness on the desert air for the last two years. Very lovely, and very simple-minded, she was allowed more of her own way than it is ever good for a woman to have. Engrossed in politics, her brother left her almost entirely to her own amusements and fancies. Unfortunately, she was induced to accept an invitation to stay at Lord Wharton's, a man notorious for what are so strangely misnamed gallantries, and whose Lady was as bad as himself. She had scarcely reached the place before, also, her intended visit reached Sir Robert's ears. With him, a resolution always carried itself into action with all possible rapidity : he ordered post horses to his carriage, and went himself as courier to precede it. Making no excuses, and listening to none, he insisted on his sister's immediate appearance and departure, and sent her off next day into Norfolk. Fortune, however, to-night seemed resolved on making full amends to a beauty cut short in the first flush of success, and

sent to waste two of her prettiest years in the dull seclusion of an old house in the country.

“What blooming simplicity!” exclaimed Lord Townshend.

“Positive milk of roses!” exclaimed Lady Mary Wortley Montague; but the sneer passed unheeded; and Lord Townshend, crossing the room, entreated Mrs. Courtenaye to present him to her lovely young friend.

Miss Walpole was a soft, sleepy-looking beauty, with a pretty, startled, fawnlike look in her large eyes; shy, silent, and with gathered blushes of two summers on her cheek: but, if she had few words, she had a great many smiles, and of these Lord Townshend had the entire benefit. She was just one of those sweet and simple creatures whose attraction Talleyrand so well described, when he was asked what was the charm he found in Madame ——’s society: “*C’est que cela me repose!*”

Nothing could be more satisfactory than this conquest was to Lord Norbourne; he saw how it would strengthen the connexion between

Walpole and Townshend, and he liked the *éclat* of its happening at his daughter's house. No one in his secret soul more despised the small vanities and successes of society, while he, also, well knew the advantage to which they might be turned; but he had to-night one deeper and dearer source of gratification — it was seeing his daughter look so well. Lady Marchmont had superintended her toilette, and it was the very triumph of exquisite taste; every thing about it seemed as fragile and delicate as herself. The robe was the palest pink taffety, trimmed with the finest lace, and a magnificent set of emeralds served to contrast her soft fair hair. The excitement of the evening lighted up her eyes, and warmed her cheek with a faint but lovely colour —

“The crimson touched with pale.”

The royal party had just departed; Queen Caroline having said all those flattering things which come with such a grace from royalty, and which no one knew better how to apply than she did; and the circle, sufficiently satisfied

with distinction, began to grow gayer than ever.

“ My dear Constance, your hand is very feverish,” said Norbourne, approaching his wife; “ you are exerting yourself too much: come with me to the next room, it is much cooler there.”

She thanked him with the deeper colour of pleasure, for one kind word of his made her heart beat its quickest and sweetest time, and they turned to go into the adjoining room. At that moment there was a simultaneous rush towards the spot where a popular singer was commencing a favourite song of the time; Norbourne felt the arm that was in his cling suddenly to him for support, and then relax its hold: he had scarcely time to prevent her sinking on the ground. He caught her up, and bore her to the first window near. The blood was rushing from her nose and mouth—she had broken a blood-vessel!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SICK ROOM.

If ever angels walked on weary earth
In human likeness, thou wert one of them.
Thy native heaven was with thee, but subdued
By suffering life's inevitable lot ;
But the sweet spirit did assert its home
By faith and hope, and only owned its yoke
In the strong love that bound it to its kind.

THE cold gray light of the morning was struggling through the closed windows, and making the mournful light of a sick room yet more mournful ; around were signs of recent festivity, in strange contrast to the ghastly present. The wax lights were slowly burning down ; on the dressing-table, and before the mirror, were scattered a thousand gay toys and trifles. Flasks of precious scents, left open in the hurry, made the atmosphere heavy with perfume,

while gems of immense value were laid carelessly among them.

The dress of the preceding evening had been flung on a chair near, and on the floor was a bouquet of rare, but faded flowers, and a glittering fan; but the glitter of the fan was stained with red blood-spots. What now were the graceful vanities of the night? Nothing, or less than nothing! Wrapped in a white dressing-gown, which had been hastily thrown round her, her hair loosened from its confinement, but with some of the neglected jewels yet shining in it, lay Constance Norbourne. Life was fast ebbing away, and the physician had said that there was no hope. There she lay, white as the pillow on which she rested for the last time; a dull film had gathered over the eyes which yet dwelt lovingly on the friends beside her; and her fallen mouth, with the faint purple circle around it, indicated the near approach of death. Lady Marchmont, still in the gay costume of the preceding night, sat on the bed, and supported the head of her dying friend; while Norbourne knelt beside,

holding the wan hand, whose pulsation grew feebler every moment. Lord Norbourne stood beside, and watched his last, his most beloved child, dying before him; his last hope, his last sweet link of affection breaking.

“It cannot be!” exclaimed he, in a burst of uncontrollable emotion: “so young, so very young, to die! Tell me that your skill can save her, and take all I have in the world!”

The physician took his hand, and strove to draw him aside; but the attempt caught the eye of the sufferer; she strove to raise herself, and extend her hand to her father, but it dropped heavily on the coverlid.

“Let him stay!” said she, faintly; and, looking towards the physician, continued: “I know I am dying, but death is not yet in my heart. Can you not give me a moment’s strength? any thing to dispel, for a little while, this faint sickness? A few words are all I want to say, I cannot die without saying them!”

“Let her have her own way,” whispered the medical man; and, pouring a few restora-

tive drops into a glass of water, he held it to her lips, while Lady Marchmont bathed her temples with essence.

Either they revived her, or expiring nature felt the unconquerable strength of love mighty even to the last. She sat half upright, supported on Henrietta's shoulder ; and, taking her father's hand, she clasped it with her husband's.

“ He will be your child,” said she ; “ my remembrance will be the link to bind you together. My beloved father, you owe him a debt only affection can repay. Think how kind he has always been to your wearied and suffering child : night after night he has watched over me ; day after day he has given up pleasures and occupations to yield me the only enjoyment of which I was capable—the conscious happiness of his presence. And you, dearest Norbourne, will you not cling to his old age like a dear and only son ? Love him, were it only for the great love that I have borne unto you ! ”

Again her head dropped on the pillow, and her father and husband felt the hands that

had clasped theirs relax their faint pressure, and again Henrietta wiped away the cold dews that stood on her forehead. She lay for some minutes motionless, save when the heavy eye-lids were slowly raised, and her dim eyes yet dwelt fondly on those who watched her least movement. All at once her eyes kindled, and she again raised herself, with a little of Henrietta's instant assistance. Constance put her hand under the pillow, and drew from thence a small Bible.

“ Father !” exclaimed she, “ this has been my constant companion, let it henceforth be yours. May it teach you, even as it has taught me, the blessed hope in which I die : we shall meet again in a happier and a better world ! Henrietta, dear and kind friend, think sometimes of the peace and faith which support me even in death. Father, my beloved father ! could I leave you as I do, with words of comfort, but for that Divine belief whose trust is immortal ! God bless you !”

She sank back, fainting ; but this time it was Norbourne's arm that supported her : once

again her eyes unclosed, and fixed on her husband's face with an expression of the most utter tenderness : from thence they never moved again. The eyelids closed wearily, and there was a convulsive movement of the hands ; then came a frightful stillness, broken by a low gurgling in the throat. The mouth fell ; the hand Lord Norbourne clasped grew still and rigid ; her husband bent over her, and touched her lips—they were ice—it was a corpse that he held in his arms.

CHAPTER XX.

The fountain's low singing is heard on the wind,
Like a melody bringing sweet fancies to mind ;
Away in the distance is heard the far sound
From the streets of the city that compass it round,
Like the echo of mountains, or ocean's deep call :
Yet that fountain's low singing is heard over all.

The turf and the terrace slope down to the tide
Of the Thames, that sweeps onwards a world at its side ;
And dark the horizon with mast and with sail
Of the thousand tall ships that have weather'd the gale ;
While beyond the arched bridge the old abbey appears,
Where England has garnered—the glories of years.

There are lights in the casement — how weary the ray
That asks from the night time the toils of the day !
I fancy I see the brow bent o'er the page,
Whose youth wears the paleness and wrinkles of age ;
What struggles, what hopes, what despair may have been,
Where sweep those dark branches of shadowy green !

THE last gleams of a summer sunset were
reddening amid the topmast boughs of the

Inner Temple garden, while the shadow fell, dark as the night it heralded, on the turf below. Though in the heart of a vast city, it was impossible to imagine a more perfect picture of repose than was here presented. Not a creature was to be seen ; the birds rested on the boughs, undisturbed by a fluttering wing, or a snatch of song. There were red and white roses growing around : but the rival flowers were unstirred by even a breath of wind ; they were still as the ashes of the once stirring spirits that gathered them as badges for their fatal warfare. Strange that the flower so peculiarly the lover's own, around which hung the daintiest conceits of poesy, on which the eye lingers, to dream of the cheek it holds loveliest on earth—strange that the rose should have been sign for the fiercest struggle ever urged by party-strife — a strife that laid desolate the fair fields of England for so many years. And yet, how much chivalric association has Shakespeare flung around their bloom ! But for him, the wars of the “ rival houses ” would be but obscure chronicles of inglorious

wars — fighting for fighting sake ; no liberty to be defended or obtained, and no foreign enemy driven triumphantly from the frontier : but for him, “ the aspiring blood of Lancaster ” would long since have sunk in the ground. But Shakespeare has called life out of the past ; a thousand passions of humanity hang around those white and red flowers. He has given the lasting archive to the high-born house that boasted,—

“ Our airy buildeth in the cedar’s top,
And dallies with the wind, and scorns the sun.”

It is he who has given the life of memory to “ the princely Edward,” the subtle Richard, the brave-spirited Margaret, and the sad philosophy of the meek Henry, which comes home to many weary of a bleak and troubled world ; and never do we feel how completely Shakespeare was our national poet, till we tread his own *locale*.

I confess I have a great disdain for the west end of the town. It belongs to the small, the petty, and the present. From Hyde Park

Corner to Charing Cross, all is utterly uninteresting: then history begins. We have the feudal state in the gloomy and Gothic grandeur of Northumberland House; we pass along the Strand, where Jack Cade pursued his brief triumph — the prototype of every popular insurrection unbased on any great principle — sudden, cruel, and useless! We have the last fine speech of Lord Scales in our ears,—

“ Ah, countrymen! if, when you make your prayers,
 God should be so obdurate as yourselves,
 How would it fare with your departed souls?”

and the green solitude of the Temple garden is the very place to muse upon his words. We leave the crowded street behind: we linger for a moment beside the little fountain, the sweetest that

Ever sang the sunny hours away,
 Or murmured to the moonlit hours of love.

It is, I believe, our only fountain, and all the associations of a fountain are poetical. It carries us to the East, and the stately halls of the caliphs rise on the mind's eye; and we

think over the thousand and one stories which made our childhood so happy, and stored up a world of unconscious poetry for our future years: or else it conjures up the graceful old Italian histories of moonlight festivals, when the red wine was cooled, and the lute echoed by the soft sound of falling waters. We leave the world of reality behind us for that of romance. That little fountain keeps, with its music, the entrance, as if to lull all more busy cares before we enter that quiet garden. Once entered in, how much lies around to subdue the troubled present with the mighty past! The river is below, with its banks haunted by memory.

The whole history of England — and it is a glorious one — is called up at a glance. Westminster Abbey — the altar of the warrior, and the grave of the poet — sheds its own sanctity on the atmosphere; and yet to look beneath the still shadow of those stately trees, in the spiritual presence of the departed, life is as troubled and as anxious

as elsewhere ; the cares of to-day predominate, let the scenes around be what they may.

“ I cannot help,” said Walter Maynard, as he gazed, listlessly, from one of the upper windows, “ reading my fate in one of those little boats now rocking on the tide, only fastened by a rope, scarcely visible to the passer by. So am I tossed on the ebbing tide of life — now in sunshine, now in shade — seemingly free, yet, in reality, fettered by the strong, though slight chain of circumstance. For a small sum, any passenger may enter that boat and direct its course ; and here again is similitude. I am at the beck of others. I may scarcely think my own thoughts, they must run in whatever channel public taste may choose ; and that puts me in mind how I promised Curl his pamphlet this very night. How weary I am of exhausting the resources of language in dressing up the vague commonplaces of party, or giving plausibility to sophisms I feel to be untrue ! but it must be done :” and, muttering to himself,

“ For inspiration round his head,
The goddess Want her pinions spread,”

he drew his table towards him, and began to write.

The scene of his labours, and his own appearance, were much changed since his first lodging in London. Still, there was an air of careless discomfort in his room ; nothing was in its place ; books, foils, papers, and clothes, were scattered together, and a female mask lay beside his inkstand. He was fashionably dressed ; but looked, as was really the case, as if he had not been in bed the previous night. His face was worn, and one red flush burnt on each cheek ; though even that could scarcely animate the sunk and heavy eye. After a few minutes passed, first in writing, then in erasing what he had written, “ It is of no use,” said he, flinging down the pen, “ I am not worth a single phrase ; alas ! I want motive—the mere necessity of exertion is not enough. Would that I could dream as I once dreamed ! that I could still think fame the glorious reality I once held a whole life’s

labour would cheaply purchase! But what does it matter, whether there be a name or no on the tombstone that weighs down our cold ashes? Ah! I promised Marston his verses to-morrow: I sell my opinions, I may as well do the same with my sentiments;" and again he drew the paper towards him.

At first, he wrote mechanically, and flung aside one sheet of paper, and then another; it was no longer the eager and impassioned writer, who, in his early composition, forgot want, cold, and misery: no, the real had eaten, like rust, into his soul. Last night's excess had left him weary and feverish; yet of all shapes that temptation can assume, surely that of social success is the most fascinating.

The imaginative temperament is full of vivid creations, of fanciful imagery, and sudden thoughts, all of which are impelled by their nature to communication; and to find that this communication interests or amuses, is a powerful stimulus. The vanity is at once encouraged and gratified; while the present

small triumph is too readily taken as earnest for a greater one. The vanity I speak of, is vanity of the highest and best kind ; it belongs to the class of our most ethereal emotions ; it asks “ golden opinions from all ranks of men,” because it is keenly susceptible, and has an even feminine craving for sympathy ; it asks not so much praise as appreciation ; it is generous and self-devoted : still it is vanity.

There is also in mental exertion an absolute necessity for re-action : how often do the thoughts, long confined to one subject, crave, as it were, to spring out of themselves, or to run off in any opposite direction ! To this may be ascribed the difference that often exists between the writings and the conversations of genius. In the first is embodied the moral truth of their being, worked out by strong belief and deep feeling ; the other contains all that is sceptical and careless,—it is the glitter of the waters when not at rest. The thousand paradoxes that spring up, are thrown off both for amusement and for relief ; and recklessly flung aside by the utterer, who

never means them to be taken as the creed of his real sentiments, or of his more earnest thoughts.

Walter Maynard was melancholy, impassioned, and sensitive; his heart preyed upon itself when alone: but, in society, he was lively, witty, and easily carried away by the impetus of discourse. Last night, the ready answer, the quick ridicule, the quaint imagery, which clothed his ideas as some fantastic garment, had made him the life of that gay meeting; but to-day he was paying the penalty of over-excitement. Fatigued and depressed, he saw nothing but difficulties and labour before him. He took up the papers beside him, and more than one unpaid bill was mingled with them. Instead of forcing upon him the necessity of exertion, they discouraged him from attempting it: of late, he had led a very gay life.

Norbourne Courtenaye had introduced him to several young men about town, who, rich and idle, were only too glad to fall in with so amusing a companion. Midnight after

midnight passed away in their society; for Walter was flattered and excited. But deep in his inmost soul he felt that this was not the fate he had purposed to achieve amid the green valleys of his youth. His early dreams haunted him like reproaches; and every morning he rose with the full purpose of pursuing some more settled plan: but he lacked motive, he had no one dependent on his industry; and every day he grew to care less and less for hopes, that he now overharshly held to be illusions.

To see much of mankind sickens the philosopher and the poet; only in solitude can he continue to work for their benefit, or to crave for their sympathy. An expression that Pope had used while talking to Walter, had produced a far deeper impression than its utterer suspected, or, perhaps, intended. "If," said Pope, "I were to begin life over again, knowing what I know now, I would not write a single verse."

Maynard could not help thinking "Of

what avail is toil, if such be the result? Have I, then, devoted life to a shadow? is its pursuit weary, and its possession worthless? Yet this is what our greatest poet says of poetry."

CHAPTER XXI.

Oh, what a waste of feeling and of thought
Have been the imprints on my roll of life!
What worthless hours! to what use have I turned
The golden gifts which are my hope and pride!
My power of song, unto how base a use
Has it been put! with its pure ore I made
An idol, living only on the breath
Of idol worshippers. Alas! that ever
Praise should have been what praise has been to me —
The opiate of the mind!

THE rosy shadows of evening had deepened into purple, and a soft, faint obscurity wrapped all surrounding objects; but Walter Maynard still hung over the scroll, on which he had at last begun to write. Composition, like every thing else, feels the influence of time. At first, all is poetry with the young poet; his heart is full of emotions eagerly struggling for utterance; every thing suggests the exercise of his own

sweet art. A leaf, a flower, the star far off in the serene midnight, a look, a word, are enough for a poem. Gradually this profusion exhausts itself, the mind grows less fanciful, and poetry is rather a power than a passion. Feelings have hardened into thoughts, and the sensations of others are no longer almost as if they had been matter of experience. The world has become real, and we have become real along with it. Our own knowledge is now the material where-with we work ; and we have gathered a stock of recollections, bitter and pleasant, which now furnish the subjects that we once created : but these do not come at the moment's notice, like our former fantasies : we must be in the mood ; and such mood comes but seldom to our worn and saddened spirits. Still, the " vision and the faculty divine " are never quite extinguished ; the spiritual fire rises when all around is night, and the sad and tender emotion finds its old accustomed resource in music.

Such was now the case with Walter. The softening influence of the quiet garden, and the dreamy evening, had gradually subdued him.

Scenes, long since forgotten, had been peopling his solitude with one still cherished image paramount over all; one young fair face, whose sweet eyes seemed to look upon him reproachfully: but his own words best shew the weary spirit now disquieted within him,—

Faint and more faint amid the world of dreams,
That which once my all, thy image seems,
Pale as a star that in the morning gleams.

Long time that sweet face was my guiding star,
Bringing me visions of the fair and far,
Remote from this world's toil and this world's jar.

Around it was an atmosphere of light,
Deep with the tranquil loveliness of night,
Subdued and shadowy, yet serenely bright.

Like to a spirit did it dwell apart,
Hushed in the sweetest silence of my heart,
Lifting me to the heaven from whence thou art.

Too soon the day broke on that haunted hour,
Loosing its spell, and weakening its power,
All that had been imagination's dower.

The noontide quenched that once enchanted ray;
Care, labour, sorrow, gathered on the day;
Toil was upon my steps, dust on my way.

They melted down to earth my upward wings;
I half forgot the higher, better things —
The hope which yet again thy image brings.

Would I were worthier of thee! I am fain,
Amid my life of bitterness and pain,
To dream once more my early dreams again.

Walter was disturbed by a low rap at the door. It was so indistinct and hesitating, that, at first, he thought himself mistaken; a second summons, however, led him to rise and open to his visitor. It was the very person that he foreboded — Mr. Curl. The gentleman stood for a moment, watching him close the door very reluctantly; and then took refuge, rather than a seat, in the window, having most ingeniously contrived to place two chairs, as a sort of barrier, between himself and his host. Walter resumed his place, and each kept silence for a few moments: a silence broken by Walter himself.

“I am afraid,” said he.

“Afraid of what?” exclaimed Curl, looking round with an air of alarm.

Maynard subdued a smile, and continued,—

“ I am afraid I have been a little too bitter about Sir Robert. Let me read to you one or two passages that I think would bear softening.”

Curl's face lighted up; a gleam of satisfaction kindled his keen eyes. “ No, no!” cried he, “ never soften down any thing; least of all, what you say of a political opponent. As to reading your pamphlet, I never let my authors read to me. What they say is no business of mine; I only sell books: I neither have them read to me, nor do I read them. But give me your papers; the press is waiting.”

“ Really, Mr. Curl,” said Maynard, hesitating, “ there is so much that I wish to add ——”

“ Very foolish,” replied the publisher, “ to add any thing; keep it for the next time. Why should you do more for me than I ask? so give me the papers.”

“ They are not quite ready,” answered Maynard.

“ Not ready !” cried Curl.

“ But you shall have them by six o'clock

to-morrow," interrupted Walter; "you could not begin printing before. The fact is, I was worried and out of spirits this morning."

"The very time, of all others, to write," ejaculated his visitor; "being out of humour, which is what is usually called out of spirits — being out of humour with the whole world gives such zest to your spleen against individuals."

"I am sick of every thing and every body!" exclaimed Walter.

"Very likely," replied the other, calmly; "so used I when I was young as you, and any thing went wrong with me. Now I know that it is of no use caring much, let what will happen."

"I wish I could think the same," muttered his listener.

"I am very glad you do not," replied Curl; "for then you would be worth nothing."

"That is exactly what I am worth!" exclaimed Walter, colouring. "The truth is, Mr. Curl, I cannot write when I am plagued about trifles; and a tiresome dun this morn-

ing put to flight every idea that I had in the world."

"Mr. Maynard," said the bookseller, in a solemn tone, "it is very wrong to run in debt."

"How can I help it?" returned Walter, pettishly.

"Let me advise you," continued the other, with the same solemnity, "never to have any article for which you cannot pay at the time. Expectations are the worst paymasters in the world."

"Well," cried Walter, "since you have taken upon yourself the office of advice, I hope you, also, mean to take that of assistance. Now do, like a good creature, pay me at once for the pamphlet, which, I give you my honour as a gentleman, shall be in your hands by six o'clock to-morrow."

"Sir," said Curl, "what you ask is against my principles; you are in the second stage of authorship."

"What do you mean?" asked his auditor.

"I never object," was the answer, "to

advancing money to the young writer commencing business; it encourages him, shews him what he may do; and, moreover, he is far the most anxious of the two to see himself in print. But when he publishes and succeeds, he fancies all money will be made as easily as he made the first; he begins to think much of his trouble, and has used up his first stock of ideas. Then I decline advancing money, because it is only want that makes him work. You are in the second stage!"

Walter coloured a yet deeper crimson; he was half inclined to throw papers and publisher out of the window, which was temptingly open. A moment passed, and he was pale as before; he felt that he had neither right nor cause for complaint, his own folly was alone to blame. "Well," said he, with a forced smile, "I, as a writer of moral essays and pamphlets for the 'good of my country,' ought not to object to principles; they certainly do turn a sentence admirably: but let us talk of something else. I am thinking of writing a comedy: 'The

Lavinia,' of whom I predict great things, would turn every body's head as the coquette."

"The more like real life," replied Curl. "I always observe people's heads are turned, as they call it, by something that approaches as nearly to nothing as possible; but I have two other visits to pay, and must wish you good evening."

"Good evening," said Walter; and, bowing to his visitor, rose to open the door.

Curl hesitated on the threshold; then, suddenly turning round, he approached the table. "Mr. Maynard," said he, in a tone of voice very different to his usual hard and abrupt manner, "I do not see why I should keep to my principles any more than others. It is a weakness to like any body; but I like you — you are of a different order to those with whom I generally come in contact. You are going all wrong; you are pale and feverish; mind and body cannot stand the hard exercise to which you put them both: don't kill yourself: you'll like life better the longer you live. There's

the money for the pamphlet: I know you will let me have it soon. Go to bed to-night."

The sound of the gold rang upon the table; but before the echo ceased, Curl was gone.

CHAPTER XXII.

A MATRIMONIAL TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

These are the things that fret away the heart —
Cold, careless trifles ; but not felt the less
For mingling with the hourly acts of life.
It is a cruel lot for the fine mind,
Full of emotions generous and true,
To feel its light flung back upon itself ;
All its warm impulses repelled and chilled,
Until it finds a refuge in disdain !
And woman, to whom sympathy is life,
The only atmosphere in which her soul
Developes all it has of good and true ;
How must she feel the chill !

“ How fond she was of flowers ! ” exclaimed Lady Marchmont, turning sadly away from a stand of choice plants, which Mrs. Courtenaye had sent her, two days before her death ; “ there was a likeness between them — so frail, so fair, and doomed so soon to perish. She was too

good to last ; and I feel as if I had lost an angel from my side. I was always better when I had been with her."

A rap at the door of her closet interrupted her soliloquy.

" I thought," muttered she, " that I had given strict orders that no one should be admitted — well, come in !" and Lord Marchmont made his appearance. " The very person I most wished to see !" exclaimed Henrietta, starting up, eagerly, to receive him.

" My dear Lady Marchmont, your energy is positively startling," said he, slowly articulating his words, and deliberately seating himself in an arm-chair, which he moved twice ; once to avoid the air from an open window, and next to avoid the sun.

His wife well knew that it was in vain to speak till he had finished his arrangements for his personal comfort ; and she solaced her impatience by tearing a rose to pieces.

Lord Marchmont was about thirty years of age, and what is generally called a fine-looking man. His figure was good, as far as his

height and proportion went; but his movements wanted ease, and, consequently, grace; and there was something of self-importance in his air—the last thing in the world to prepossess a beholder in his favour. We may admit the superiority of another, but we very much object to their assuming it as an undeniable fact. His features were high and good, with a strongly marked aquiline nose; but the mouth neither gave sweetness, nor the eye light, to his face. His eyes were of a cold dim blue, that never seemed to vary; they were unfamiliar with tears, and the pupil never brightened with laughter. His lips were thin, and, when they did smile, it was stiff, and made up like the embroidery on his coat. His dress was splendid; his hands glittered with rings, his snuff-box was covered with diamonds, and his ruffles were of the finest Mechlin lace. The only fault was the want of harmony in colouring; the one hue destroyed the effect of the other. I am persuaded, that where there is no eye for colours,

something of that keen susceptibility is wanting, which constitutes the poetical and picturesque; and, certainly, to neither of these qualities had his lordship the slightest claim. His style of conversation was made up of set sentences; and his manner, what his inferiors called overbearing, and his equals tiresome. His mind was made up of lessons and examples, he only reasoned by precedents; everything with him went by example, and it was a relief to him when he could quote an authority. If he had a passion, it was love of money: he loved it both for its own sake — that close kind of attachment which money certainly does inspire — and also for the enjoyments that it could procure. He liked the pleasures of the table, and he liked attendance; he was a sort of Sublime Porte to his valets. Generally speaking, his comprehension was slow, and his ideas narrow; but the moment his own interest was concerned, it was astonishing how his perception enlarged: he became cautious, if not enlightened; and cun-

ning, if not shrewd. In short, his character might be summed up in a word—Lord Marchmont was an intensely selfish man.

Being, at length, comfortably settled in his *fauteuil*, one foot balanced on a chair, and the other reposed on a stool, his snuff-box opened, and his perfumed handkerchief ready,—Henrietta thought that she might begin to speak.

“ I wanted so much to see you,” exclaimed she.

“ Very flattering,” replied his lordship, with a grave inclination.

“ I have so much,” continued she, “ to talk to you about.”

“ Perhaps, madam,” interrupted Lord Marchmont, in a slow and solemn tone, “ you will accord me my privilege of speaking first. I have also much to say to you.”

It was now Henrietta's turn to seek a comfortable position; and, sinking back on the sofa, she began to pick another rose to pieces. To this his lordship paid no attention, he had a certain number of words to say, and the idea

never crossed him but that they must be of paramount interest. He rarely looked at the person to whom he was talking; his glance dwelt either on his feet, or his hands, or his snuff-box — something, in short, that was more peculiarly his own; to say nothing of occasional glances at the looking-glass opposite. He talked as if he were reading aloud, and that in the most monotonous manner.

“It is my duty, madam, to tell you,” he began, in a solemn tone, “that I exceedingly disapprove of your conduct.”

Henrietta’s colour rose. “This is the first time I have heard of it,” exclaimed she; “if you ——”

“Pray, madam, do not interrupt me,” said Lord Marchmont; “you may be quite sure that I never make an assertion which I am not prepared to prove. I again repeat, that I exceedingly disapprove of your conduct, in which I am more surprised you should persist, as you are aware of my complete disapprobation.”

“What have I done?” asked his listener.

“ Again, madam, am I under the necessity of requesting that you will abstain from interruption. The petulance of your sex is especially shewn in trifles. As I heard his Grace the Duke of Wharton observe, only yesterday,—‘ Women never will listen.’ This was his remark while we were walking in the Mall together; and I could not but be struck by its profound truth. I am not above being instructed, whatever, madam, you may think to the contrary.”

Henrietta bit her lip to prevent herself from saying, that the task of instruction appeared to her, in this instance, a very hopeless one; and his lordship went on to observe,—

“ I am sorry to see that, this morning even, you persist in disobeying me. I repeat, that I entirely disapprove of your line of conduct.”

“ Why, what am I doing now but listening to you? Is that what you disapprove?”

“ To listen to me, madam, is your duty: though,” said he, in a voice growing every

moment more solemn, " I regret to say, that you pay but little attention to it. Again I assert, that I have only too much reason to complain of your conduct."

CHAPTER XXIII.

PRUDENCE IN POLITICS.

How often, in this cold and bitter world,
Is the warm heart thrown back upon itself!
Cold, careless, are we of another's grief;
We wrap ourselves in sullen selfishness:
Harsh-judging, narrow-minded, stern and chill
In measuring every action but our own.
How small are some men's motives, and how mean!
There are who never knew one generous thought;
Whose heart-pulse never quickened with the joy
Of kind endeavour, or sweet sympathy.—
There are too many such!

It is rather alarming, in a conjugal *tête-à-tête*, when your husband tells you he only comes to complain of your conduct, and Lord Marchmont's severity of aspect was quite awful; however, Henrietta only gave him a look of inquiry, and he went on:—

“ It was full three days ago that I told you how I hated the sight of black, yet you

wore it yesterday evening, and I observe that your ribands are black this morning.”

Tears started in the countess's eyes, but she repressed them ; and, forcing a smile, said,

“ I am glad to find that it is not my conduct, but my dress, that meets your disapprobation.”

“ I thought,” replied her husband, “ and the event proves that I was right in so thinking, that you would only laugh at what I should urge ; but women are incapable of a serious thought ! ”

“ Well ! ” returned Lady Marchmont, “ at all events, you must allow me to be flattered at the interest you take in my personal appearance ! ”

“ You are quite mistaken ! ” exclaimed Lord Marchmont ; “ I know too well what I owe to my own dignity as a man, to interfere in such feminine trifles, unless peculiar circumstances gave a temporary importance, which certainly does not belong to their ephemeral nature : I object to your wearing black on political grounds.”

Henrietta looked at him with undisguised astonishment.

“ Pray, madam,” asked he, “ for whom are you in mourning ? ”

The tears, with which Henrietta had long been struggling, could be checked no longer, and her voice faltered, as she answered, “ For Mrs. Courtenaye : you know she was my kind, my dear friend ! ”

“ I know,” returned her husband, “ that she was Lord Norbourne’s daughter. Are you aware that I have, for a week past, been in the opposition ? But I own it is too much to expect that women should understand these matters.”

“ But what,” asked Lady Marchmont, “ has that to do with my wearing black ? ”

“ I thought,” replied his lordship, “ that my reasons would be beyond your comprehension ; I will, however, endeavour to adapt them to your understanding. Your wearing mourning for Lord Norbourne’s daughter, is an external evidence of alliance between us ; now, I am completely opposed to him. I hold his

principles, which are those of the Walpole party, to be injurious to the rights which, as a free-born Briton, I am bound to maintain. I beg that you will wear coloured ribands to-night!”

“ I am not going out,” replied Henrietta.

“ I insist upon it that you do. The Prince has sent us an invitation, and it was his royal highness who first drew my attention to your incongruous costume, by asking, ‘ for whom was Lady Marchmont in mourning?’ ”

“ Your will, my lord, shall be obeyed!” replied Henrietta, almost involuntarily mimicking his solemn tone; “ but do you know that Prince Frederick makes very strong love to me? Are you jealous?”

“ I could not pay myself so bad a compliment,” returned her husband, looking towards the mirror: “ it is only acknowledging my taste, to admire my wife; but Lady Marchmont can never forget to whom she belongs!”

“ It would be very difficult,” thought Henrietta; but she kept her thoughts to herself, while his lordship, satisfied with this display

of eloquent authority, was employed in perfuming his handkerchief afresh. "I promise you," said she, after a pause of some minutes, "to wear the last new dress you gave me, it is a triumph of taste!"

Lord Marchmont bowed, and appropriated the compliment as if the taste had been his own, not the milliner's.

"And now," continued his wife, "I have a petition to offer."

"When Beauty pleads, how can she plead in vain?"

was his lordship's gallant reply.

"You know Miss Churchill? you used to admire her complexion so much. Well, her very foolish grandmother has mixed herself up in some nonsensical correspondence with the court of St. Germain; or, rather, has let herself be made a tool by Mr. Trevanion, who, I am happy to say, is not Ethel's husband; they arrested him just in time. However, the poor old lady is in great distress; she and her granddaughter are coming up to London, and I wish to give them all possible countenance

and assistance. May I ask them to stay here? I am so glad that you are in the opposition!"

"I always," replied Lord Marchmont, after a long pause, during which he vouchsafed not the slightest attention to the earnest and imploring looks of his wife, "have considered women to be superlatively foolish; but so glaring an instance of their folly never before came under my own personal knowledge! Because I am opposed to Sir Robert on some questions, is it immediately to be supposed that I am about to give up my country, my king, and my God?"

"Why, who ever asked you to do any thing of the sort?" ejaculated Henrietta, in utter dismay.

"You did, madam, when you ventured to suppose that I would make my house the rendezvous of conspirators and Jacobins!"

"I did but ask your protection," returned Lady Marchmont, "for a weak old woman, and a friendless young one!"

"Both very dangerous!" replied his lordship: "you may wish to see my head fall on

a scaffold! I cannot join in your desire, and I must point your attention to the extreme ingratitude of your proceeding: I believe that you might go through London, and find your house and equipage unequalled; why you should, therefore, wish to engage me in plots and dangers, completely baffles even my penetration!"

"These things never entered my head!" exclaimed Lady Marchmont.

"You see how limited is your foresight: it is fortunate that you are connected with one who looks a little more into the consequences of actions than yourself!" replied he, with a self-complacent smile.

"Well, well," returned she, "I withdraw my request: I was wrong in making it. Wrong," thought she to herself, "in hoping that you could have one kind and generous feeling!"

"I rarely fail to convince!" said Lord Marchmont, rising: "I believe that we have no further occasion to trespass on each other's time. The morning is the most valuable por-

tion of the day, properly applied. I wish, however, to give you one piece of advice before I leave: have I your permission?"

Henrietta bowed a polite assent.

"Allow me," continued Lord Marchmont, "to enter my protest against your passion for forming female friendships. They are generally useless — often inconvenient. Your friendship with Mrs. Courtenaye induced you to wear mourning, to the great hazard of my political consistency."

"He has only been in the opposition a week!" thought his wife.

"Your friendship for Miss Churchill has induced you to wish that I should lend the sanction of my countenance to traitors and Jacobins. I beg that, for the future, you will follow my example — I have no intimate friends!"

"I should very much wonder if you had!" muttered the countess, as the door closed on the slow and stately exit of her husband.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT.

Love is a thing of frail and delicate growth ;
Soon checked, soon fostered ; feeble, and yet strong :
It will endure much, suffer long, and bear
What would weigh down an angel's wing to earth,
And yet mount heavenward ; but not the less.
It dieth of a word, a look, a thought ;
And when it dies, it dies without a sign
To tell how fair it was in happier hours :
It leaves behind reproaches and regrets,
And bitterness within affection's well,
For which there is no healing.

LADY MARCHMONT rose from her seat, and unfastened the riband, less black than the hair that it bound.

“ So, my poor Constance,” said she, “ I am not permitted even this memorial of her ; and even Ethel I cannot serve. Of what avail,” and her eyes wandered mechanically round, “ is all the luxury by which I am sur-

rounded, if it serve only as a barrier to all kindly feelings?"

Never had Lady Marchmont felt so lonely. Disdain for her husband was mingled with the bitterness of restraint; restraint, too, where her own heart told her she was right. There never was a finer nor a higher nature than Henrietta's: she was completely carried away by impulse; but then her impulses were all generous and lofty. She was enthusiastic, and keenly susceptible; a word, a look, would send the blush to her cheek, and the light to her eye: she was eager in whatever she undertook, and yet soon and easily discouraged: she was proud, and hence impatient of authority; but kindness could have done any thing with her. She needed to love, and to be beloved; her heart was full of warmth and emotion, to which some object was a sweet necessity. The destiny of one like Henrietta is made by the affections; these repressed or disgusted, checked the growth of all good, and the life that she was now leading was calculated to do any thing but foster any more lofty or kindly feeling.

Unbroken worldly prosperity has a natural tendency to harden the sympathies: when life comes so easily to ourselves, it is difficult to fancy it going hardly with others. Without any permanent object for exertion of any kind, we are apt soon to sink into habits of indolent indulgence, and such are inevitably selfish. Vanity was Lady Marchmont's chief stimulus in the absence of a better one; and vanity is like a creeping plant, which begins by turning its lithe foliage round a single window, and ends by covering the whole edifice: but Henrietta was a difficult person to spoil, it would take many bitter lessons from experience before her passionate feelings could become cold and hardened. Her discontent at this moment was of no selfish order, but her tears fell heavily as she dwelt on the unkindness of not offering the aid that could have been so easily extended to her first and earliest friend. There is not a more bitter pang than that which accompanies the desire to befriend, and the inability of so doing.

At this moment the door of the closet

opened, and Lady Mary Wortley Montague was announced. Their first intimacy had more than slackened, still a very decent appearance of civility was preserved. Henrietta had long since discovered that she had been much more grateful for Lady Mary's earlier attentions than was at all needed. This is one of the most unpleasant lessons that experience gives; and one, moreover, that it is perpetually giving; namely, that what we fancied was liking for ourselves, was, in reality, the result of calculation, or of amusement. We fancied we were liked, when we were only useful or entertaining. Moreover, there was that in Lady Mary Wortley's mind, which effectually prevented all sympathy between Henrietta and herself, and sympathy is the basis of all friendship. There was a coarseness in the one which revolted the almost fastidious delicacy of the other; and Lady Marchmont, full of poetry, touched with romance and sentiment, had nothing in common with the harsh and hard worldliness of Lady Mary; still, as they moved in the same circle, they met often, and were

almost as polite as if they had never been friendly. Now, few friendships die a natural death, they generally come to a violent end; and it shewed no little tact in our rival beauties, that they allowed theirs to grow

“ Fine by degrees, and beautifully less.”

“ I met Lord Marchmont on the staircase,” said Lady Mary, “ or else I should ask why you are looking so dull.”

“ I am so disappointed,” replied Henrietta, who was young enough in grievances, to be eager to talk about them: “ I wanted to ask some friends, who are coming up to London under very disagreeable circumstances, to stay with us, and Lord Marchmont will not hear of it.”

“ For once,” exclaimed her companion, “ I take the husband’s side; remember, that my so doing, is not to be considered a precedent: when they are in unpleasant circumstances, the less we see of our friends the better!”

“ I beg to differ with you,” returned Henrietta, colouring.

“ You need not look so angry,” returned Lady Mary; “ at all events, not at me; I am not responsible for the established principles of society; I only stated what they are.”

“ The more I see of society,” interrupted Lady Marchmont, “ the more disgusted I am with it!”

“ Fortunately for you, it does not return the compliment!” said Lady Mary: “ but do send for Lord Marchmont again, if you want somebody to quarrel with: a husband is the only legitimate resource on such occasions!”

“ What do you say to a lover?” asked Henrietta, laughing.

“ Oh, you quarrel with your lover on his own account, he is not a resource! A lover’s quarrel is made up of jealousies, doubts, hopes, fears, and all sorts of fastastic fancies: a matrimonial dispute, on the contrary, is composed of familiar and ordinary matter, a sort of ventilator to the temper!”

“ But,” said the young countess, “ Lord Marchmont and I never quarrel.”

“ Oh!” returned her ladyship, with a sneer, “ you are

‘ Content to dwell in decencies for ever !’

Well, for my part, I should prefer any thing to a perpetual calm.”

Henrietta only thought how completely she agreed with her.

“ It is very odd,” continued her visitor, “ that quarrels, which are so pleasant in love, should be so odious in marriage. I believe it is that, in the first instance, they may have consequences ; in the last, they have none : your lover may fear to lose you ; your husband can only hope, and hope in vain : the lover dreads that every quarrel may be the last ; the husband knows he may go on quarrelling to eternity !”

“ A pleasant prospect !” exclaimed Lady Marchmont.

“ Lawgivers were never more mistaken,” said Lady Mary, “ than when they ordained that the conjugal tie should last through life for better and worse ; the last injunction being strictly complied with. There should be septennial marriages, as well as septennial parliaments !”

“ Why, my dear Lady Mary,” exclaimed Henrietta, laughing, “ do you not represent one of your father’s boroughs ? ”

“ Why, indeed ! ” returned her companion. “ I would bring in a bill every session ; people grant more favours from being tired of refusing, than from any other motive. In life it is the irrevocable that is terrible : while there is change, there is hope. We should keep each other in much better order if, at the end of seven years, there were to be a reckoning of grievances. It would be a good moral lesson to many a husband, to come down on the seventh anniversary and find his tea not made, and his muffin not buttered. These are the things that come home to a man’s feelings ! ”

“ And what,” asked Henrietta, “ if it were the gentleman who was reported missing ? ”

“ Upon my honour,” cried Lady Mary, “ I cannot look on that in any other point of view than as a relief ! ”

Henrietta did not say how entirely she was of the same way of thinking.

“ What is a woman’s stronghold ? Her

coquetry! Now, coquetry cannot exist without uncertainty," continued the fair philosopher, "and a husband is so dreadfully secure! I am myself a coquette on principles, and some of them — not needful now to enumerate — very scientific ones. We have no influence but by our influence over those called our masters; how do we acquire that influence? By flattering a man's vanity, and by playing on his hopes and fears! These are all put *hors de combat* in marriage. We have already flattered to the utmost by our choice, and what is there for a husband to hope or to fear? Were my plan carried into execution, think of the delightful uncertainty of the seventh year!"

"As you cannot make a speech, you must," said Henrietta, "put it into a treatise."

"It is more than half finished," answered her ladyship, "and I have some thoughts of adding a few notes to my own sex, 'On the best methods of acquiring influence;' all might, however, be condensed into a single word — Love!"

“Which has,” exclaimed Lady Marchmont, “the greatest power over ourselves!”

“And there lies our great mistake,” replied Lady Mary: “it is the greatest folly to care for a lover, but as they give you influence, and contribute to your vanity: for a woman to love, is turning her arrows on herself!”

“All you say,” answered Henrietta, “would be very true, if life were a game of chess, to be played by certain given rules; but think how we are governed by our feelings, and carried away by our impulses. I cannot, nay, would not, lower, as you do, the divinity of affection, for all the triumphs in the world! I would rather have been Egeria, beloved in the sweet silence of her shadowy grotto, than the goddess of Beauty, fresh risen from her native waters, with all the gods for her slaves!”

“Good morning, my dear!” exclaimed Lady Mary, rising; “I cannot endanger my morals by staying; I may grow romantic too: ‘evil communication corrupts good manners.’ Well,

well, I see Sir George Kingston is the only lover for you, who pleads, as the excuse for his perpetual inconstancy, that no woman appreciates the poetry of his love!"

CHAPTER XXV.

MEETING OF OLD FRIENDS.

How much of change lies in a little space !
How soon the spirits leave their youth behind !
The early green forsakes the bough ; the flowers,
Nature's more fairy-like and fragile ones,
Droop on the way-side, and the later leaves
Have artifice and culture — so the heart :
How soon its soft spring hours take darker hues !
And hopes, that were like rainbows, melt in shade ;
While the fair future, ah ! how fair it seemed !
Grows dark and actual.

IT was a cold and rainy afternoon as Ethel Churchill sat at the window of their new abode, a house in one of the streets leading from the Strand to the river. It was the day after their arrival, and nothing could well be more gloomy than the view : the pavement was wet, and a yellow mist obscured every object, the passers glided by like phantoms, and the Thames, at

the end, seemed dusk and heavy, as if a ray of sunshine had never rested on its waters. The room itself was large and dark, and had that peculiar air of discomfort which belongs to "ready furnished apartments:" every thing looks as if it had been bought at a sale, and there is an equal want of harmony both in the proportions and colours. The idea involuntarily occurs of how the chairs had encircled other hearths; of how, around the tables, had gathered family groups, broken up by the pressure of distress and of want. All the associations are those of poverty; and of all human evils, poverty is the one whose suffering is the most easily understood: even those who have never known it, can comprehend its wretchedness. Hunger, cold, and mortification, the disunion of families; the separation of those the most fondly attached; youth bowed by premature toil; age wasting the little strength yet remaining: — these are the familiar objects which surround poverty.

Ethel did not thus closely examine the causes of the weight upon her spirits; she only

knew that the weight was there: she was strange, lonely, unsettled, and she looked forward to nothing. Never had she before felt so forcibly the change that a few months had worked in her; and she was sad when she remembered how young she was, and how little in life remained for her. How delighted she would have been but a very little while before, at the idea of a visit to London! now lassitude and discouragement were her predominant sensations. Ethel found the time hang heavily on her hands, the more heavily for expectation. A note from Lady Marchmont had reached her early in the morning, saying, that she would be with her young friend the very moment Lord Marchmont went out.

“The fact is, my dearest Ethel,” so ran the note, “his lordship is terribly afraid of you. He sees the cause of the Stuarts triumphant in your ringlets, and the downfall of the House of Hanover in your complexion. However, as I make a point of having my own way, I cannot let you be the first exception to the rule; therefore, expect me some time in

the afternoon : I shall, if you please, pass the evening with you, delightful under any circumstances, doubly delightful as an act of disobedience. Ever your affectionate

“HENRIETTA.”

Ethel's heart clung to the writer, she was the only creature she knew in this vast city ; and, moreover, if ever there was a being formed to win and fascinate, it was Lady Marchmont : a fault in her, was more charming than a merit in another. The very difference in character drew the friends together ; different, also, in their styles of beauty, there had never been the shadow of rivalry between them : besides, both were quite young enough to have warmth, confidence, and mirth, those three ingredients of friendship.

The evening closed in, and Ethel began to make preparations for her visitor. She ordered lights, had the curtains closed, and stirred the fire till the room looked quite cheerful in the blaze. Tea was then brought in ; and Ethel had scarcely finished drawing two ponderous

arm-chairs to each side of the fireplace, when the stopping of a chair in the hall announced Lady Marchmont. Ethel flew to the top of the stairs to meet her; and, in a few moments, each stood by the fire in all the eagerness of welcome.

Tea was poured out, and each began to tell the other the many events that had taken place since their parting. Much, indeed, had occurred: they parted, girls; they met, women. A deeper meaning was in the face of either than when they sat with the moonlight falling over them beside the little fountain. They looked eagerly on each other, and felt that they were changed: there was as much, perhaps more beauty, but there was less brightness. The mind, more than the heart, gave its impression to the features. The blush came not at every second word; the cheek of either was paler; and Ethel's had an appearance of delicate health, very different from the morning bloom that it formerly wore.

There was an habitual sarcasm on Lady Marchmont's finely cut lip, and Ethel's smile

had grown into a sad sweetness. On the brow was a deeper shadow — serious and thoughtful. The glad bursts of laughter, the gay fantasies, the buoyant hopes, which they used to meet and share together, were all gone by for ever.

The servants removed the tea-things, and they drew nearer to the fire, and to each other. Both had a great deal to say, and yet the conversation languished; but we have all felt this after a long absence: confidence is a habit, and requires to be renewed. We have lost the custom of telling every thing; and we begin to fear that what we have to tell is scarcely worth being told. We have formed new acquaintances; we have entered into other amusements; we feel that our tastes are altered; and we require a little while to see if the change be mutual. Moreover, the affections are always timid; they require both encouragement and custom, before they can venture to communicate their regrets.

It is a curious, but an undeniable fact, that the meeting, after absence, of old friends, is

almost always constrained and silent at first ; they are surprised to find how little they have said of what they meant to say. It merely shews, after all, that affection is a habit.

CHAPTER XXVI.

REMINISCENCES.

Ah, tell me not that memory
Sheds gladness o'er the past ;
What is recalled by faded flowers,
Save that they did not last ?
Were it not better to forget,
Than but remember and regret ?

Look back upon your hours of youth —
What were your early years,
But scenes of childish cares and griefs ?
And say not childish tears
Were nothing ; at that time they were
More than the young heart well could bear.

Go on to riper years, and look
Upon your sunny spring ;
And from the wrecks of former years,
What will your memory bring ?—
Affections wasted, pleasures fled,
And hopes now numbered with the dead !

“ SHUT yourself up — go nowhere !” exclaimed
Lady Marchmont : “ well, I cannot help your

going mad ; but, at all events, I will not aid and abet you in so doing. You are now in town, and a town life you must lead."

" I have," replied Ethel, leaning languidly back in her chair, " neither health nor spirits for gaiety."

" A girl of nineteen talking of health and spirits!" interrupted her visitor ; " why, you have beauty enough to supply the place of both. However, I have no objection to your adopting *le genre languissant*, it will the less interfere with my own. If you were to come out starry and startling, we should not be friends a week."

" Oh, Henrietta !" exclaimed Ethel, half reproachfully.

" Nay, don't look so serious ; or, rather, upon second thoughts, do ; for it is singularly becoming to you. It is delightful to think how we shall set each other off. I am dark, classical, and have some thoughts of binding my black tresses with myrtle, and letting Sir Godfrey Kneller finish my portrait as Aspasia : you, on the contrary, are soft, fair, with the

blue eyes and golden hair of a Madonna. We shall always be contrasts, and never be rivals."

"At all events," answered Ethel, "we can never be the last."

"I don't know," said Lady Marchmont; "but, at all events, we will be generous about our lovers."

"I neither expect nor wish for any," said her companion.

"Not wish for a lover!" cried Henrietta; "I never heard any thing so absurd! or, perhaps, you would prefer waiting till after you are married?"

"My dear Henrietta," exclaimed Ethel, colouring; and, after a moment's pause, added, "I never wish to hear the name even of a lover again."

"What, my dear, frightened at the narrow escape you had of being married?" replied Lady Marchmont, purposely alluding to the marriage; for she felt that even hinting at Norbourne Courtenaye was treading on too delicate ground. No woman likes to dwell on a subject so mortifying as a faithless lover.

“ An escape you may well call it,” replied her friend. “ Oh, Henrietta! you do not know what a dreadful thing it is to see yourself on the point of being married to a man you both dislike and despise.”

“ But why did you consent to marry him ?” asked Lady Marchmont, a little conscience-stricken.

“ Because I was utterly dispirited and ill : I had not strength to say ‘ No ’ to my grandmother, whom I had always been in the habit of obeying.”

“ They would not have found me so obedient,” cried the countess.

“ I was rather passive than obedient,” replied Ethel ; “ but the interruption of the ceremony awakened me like a shock. The relief was what I cannot describe : I seemed to awake as if from a lethargy. Thought, resolution, and a belief in my own powers of resistance, appeared to revive suddenly within me. I have seen more, and reflected more, during the last month, than I ever did before in the whole course of my existence.”

“ Suppose Mr. Trevanion should obtain his pardon, would you still think yourself compelled to marry him ?”

“ No ; though I should certainly not think myself justified in marrying another.”

“ Well, then,” exclaimed Lady Marchmont, “ I shall use my utmost influence to get him beheaded, out of the way, as soon as possible. Dear, dear ! I am afraid that he would only be hanged ; at least, I can endeavour to have him complimented with the axe.”

“ My dear Henrietta, how can you jest on such serious subjects ?”

“ On what others would you have me jest ?” replied her companion, her beautiful mouth curving with a bitter smile. “ The serious things of life are its keenest mockeries. The things set apart for laughter are not half so absurd as those marked out for tears. Ah ! if we did but look at life in its true point of view — false, hollow, mocking, and weary as it is ! — we should just walk down this very street, and be found floating on the Thames to-morrow.”

Ethel watched the sudden change that passed over her companion's face with silent surprise; which when Henrietta observed, she at once resumed her former gaiety.

“It is not one of our least absurdities that we never do what we purpose doing. Here we met to-night, on purpose to talk over the past, and we have done nothing but talk over the future. Ah, I believe that most of us may as well forget the past!”

“Indeed we may,” said Ethel; and a deeper shade of sadness passed across her sweet face.

“We have not only,” added Lady Marchmont, “forgotten the past, but also the passing present. I hear my chair in the hall; and to keep Lord Marchmont waiting, when he has announced his intention of supping at home, far exceeds my prerogative; so good night, dearest, you will either see or hear from me to-morrow.”

“She is right,” murmured Ethel, as, after her guest's departure, she resumed her seat;

and, leaning her head on her hand, gave way to the indulgence of a melancholy reverie. "Of what avail is it to dwell upon the past?— I wish I could forget!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN INTERVIEW.

Why, life must mock itself to mark how small
Are the distinctions of its various pride.
'Tis strange how we delight in the unreal;
The fanciful and the fantastic make
One half our triumphs. Not in mighty things —
The glorious offerings of our mind to fate —
Do we ask homage to our vanities,
One half so much as from the false and vain :
The petty trifles that the social world
Has fancied into grandeur.

WHEN a woman has once made up her mind to be imprudent, she is very imprudent indeed ; she is quite ingenious in contriving occasions. Thanks to her age, and the interest of old friends of the family, Mrs. Churchill had escaped without punishment for her amateur treason ; and now, whether emboldened by an impunity which she most

untruly set down to the account of fear, or whether the late excitement made her present quiet insipid,—it would be difficult to say; but she was in a fret and fever to further prove, what she called, her devotion to the House of Stuart.

Lord Marchmont would have expatiated for months to come on his own prudence in refusing her admission into his house, could he have heard only a tithe of her daily discourse. Fortunately, two servants she had brought with her, were devotedly attached to their mistress; and the others only entering her apartments at rare intervals, did not understand her mystic allusions; and she now, more than ever, affected to veil her meaning under the mysterious phraseology so much adopted by the Jacobites.

One morning Ethel was surprised by a summons, unusually early, to her grandmother's room. She found her in the greatest bustle: two of the maids unpacking a multitude of trunks; while she walked up and down, now telling them where such a satin was to be

found, and then reading a letter which she held in her hand. As soon as Ethel came in, she took her hand, and, without speaking, led her to the closet adjoining.

“ I have,” said she, “ most important intelligence to communicate.”

Her listener turned pale : could it be possible that Mr. Trevanion had come to London ?

Mrs. Churchill, however, continued, without noticing her agitation : — “ I have this morning received an answer from her Grace of Buckingham. She appoints to-day for a private interview. The daughter of a king duly appreciates my humble services to her house.”

“ My dear madam !” exclaimed Ethel, “ do you think it will be quite prudent, under your present circumstances, to visit a person, whose Jacobite predilections are so well known as those of the Duchess of Buckingham ?”

“ I am not aware,” returned her grandmother, drawing up herself to her full height, “ what act you have ever observed in my whole life, that authorises you to suppose I

should allow prudence to interfere with duty? You will be ready to accompany me by twelve o'clock to-day."

Ethel knew that further remonstrance was useless; and, therefore, quietly offered her services to arrange the multitudinous wardrobe which was being unpacked.

Mrs. Churchill, always particular about her dress, was this morning more so than ever. Still, it must be confessed, that when the sad-coloured satin was arranged in rich folds, and the Mechlin lace (it was a little fortune in itself) hung to her satisfaction, she looked as perfect a specimen of an old lady as England could have produced.

The chairs came at the appointed hour, and Ethel could not but be amused at the glimpses she had of the park along which they were carried; although haunted by misgivings as to the judiciousness of their destination. They were set down in a hall of large dimensions, hung round with portraits, and filled with servants, who had more the air of guards. Two attendants marshalled them up-stairs,

where they were received by two gentlemen ushers, who conducted them along a spacious gallery into an antechamber, where they were received by her grace's chamberlain. He sent in a page, richly dressed ; and, after a message, mysteriously whispered in his ear, announced that her grace was ready to receive her guests. Two attendants, in court dresses, flung open the folding-doors of the room in which the duchess awaited their arrival. It was a long, high chamber : on the one side there were a number of narrow windows, whose curtains of crimson damask swept the floor, and gave a rich and subdued colour to the light that struggled through their massive folds ; on the other side were pictures in huge gilded frames, each with a crown on the top ; for they were all family portraits of the Stuarts. At the end of the room was a canopy, surmounted by a ducal coronet. Below was a full-length of James II., at whose feet was a sort of throne, on which the duchess was placed. Six ladies, splendidly attired, were on either side, all standing ; indeed, an arm-chair, placed near

the throne, was the only seat to be seen in the room.

The duchess received them with a gracious inclination of the head ; and, after signing to Mrs. Churchill to take the arm-chair, she extended her hand for Ethel to kiss. Silence was then broken by inquiring how Mrs. Churchill bore the fatigue of the journey ?

“ I never felt it,” replied the old lady, who was elated with all the dignity of a martyr ; “ there are times when the mind forgets the body.”

Ethel could not help smiling when she recollected how her grandmother had slept or grumbled the whole journey in her very comfortable carriage.

“ We are not ignorant of your devotion,” returned the duchess, with a very solemn air, suddenly checking herself, as if afraid of saying too much. But it is difficult to sustain conversation in such a high and forced tone, and neither party got further than a few stately sentences.

Ethel employed the time in observing the

duchess. She could trace no likeness to the portrait by which she was seated ; she was far handsomer, having retained, at least, the traces of her former beauty. She had fine high features : her eyes were rather small, and close to the nose, but bright and piercing ; and the general severity of her aspect vanished under the influence of a very pleasant smile. She wore black ; and, as the cumbrous drapery fell around her stately figure, contrasting with the dead paleness of her face (she had not worn rouge for years), there was something about her which gave more the idea of a picture than of a human being.

Apparently both the hostess and guest grew tired of maintaining the dignity of conspiracy ; for, suddenly, the duchess rose and requested Mrs. Churchill's presence in her closet, and left Ethel, much longer than she liked, to be entertained by her ladies in waiting.

The duchess and Mrs. Churchill had known each other as girls ; and it may be doubted whether they had not found some subject of conversation more amusing than even the

downfal of the House of Hanover. At last a little page made his appearance, and stated, that Miss Churchill's company was requested by her grace. She followed her little guide through a number of galleries till she found herself in a large bed-chamber, by whose fireplace both Mrs. Churchill and the duchess were seated.

“ I sent for you, my dear,” said her grandmother, “ that you might be as favoured as myself.”

Both ladies rose with a mysterious air: and her grace, first carefully looking round, and then locking her door, touched a spring in the wall. The panel flew back, and discovered a small secret chamber, hung with purple velvet, and lighted by one large lamp.

“ It burns night and day,” said her grace, entering, followed by her companions. The duchess then drew a curtain aside, which concealed a portrait of the Pretender. She dropped on her knee, and her example was followed by Mrs. Churchill, and also by Ethel, who consoled herself by thinking that if it was

an act of treason, she could not help it. Perhaps there was most treason in the interest with which she gazed on the handsome and melancholy countenance of the prince, that wore the expression of sadness peculiar to his fated race.

“It is a hard fate,” thought she, “to be exiled from so noble a heritage as England.”

On a little stand, in the middle, was a large basket, filled with white roses; the duchess took one and gave it to her young companion. They left the chamber in silence; and, after seeing that the panel was properly secured,—

“I have got another portrait to shew you,” said her grace, in a tone from which every thing but deep sadness had vanished: “alas! ours is an ill-fated house!”

They followed her into another chamber, hung with black; and, beneath a sombre canopy, mocked by the ducal coronet above, was the portrait of her son—the young duke recently deceased. He was more like the Stuarts than his mother; but it was a soft, fair likeness. The same sad and sombre ex-

pression was united with almost feminine beauty. It was of a kind too fragile for lasting. The large blue eyes seemed full of light; but the lips were feverish, and the rich colour on the cheek, hectic.

“He was my only boy,” said the duchess; and Ethel saw that the curved mouth was tremulous with suppressed emotion; and the eyes filled for a moment with unshed tears. After this, she had not even the inclination to smile at what her grace said was the occupation of her leisure hours. She undrew a curtain, and there were two wax-work figures, arrayed in robes of state, glittering with tissue and embroidery. “They are destined, when finished, for Westminster Abbey,” added his mother, with all her former stateliness.

They then adjourned to the reception-room: the duchess resumed her seat under the canopy; the damsels in waiting ranged themselves on either side; and a page brought in a massive gold salver, with chocolate, seed-cake, and canary. The refreshments over, they took their leave, were ushered in great form to their

chairs, and arrived in safety at home ; Ethel, at all events, completely tired.

But the events of the day were not over. News had arrived in London that Mr. Trevanion had effected his escape. This, coupled with Mrs. Churchill's indiscreet visit, led to more severe measures. She was placed under confinement, though allowed to remain in her own house, on account of her age ; but menaced with a fine, which would, if exacted, bring beggary along with it.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A PROJECT.

The sun was setting o'er the sea,
A beautiful and summer sun;
Crimson and bright, as if not night,
But rather day had just begun:
That lighted sky, that lighted sea,
They spoke of Love and Hope to me.

I thought how Love, I thought how Hope,
O'er the horizon of my heart
Had poured their light like yonder sun;
Like yon sun, only to depart:
Alas! that ever suns should set,
Or Hope grow cold, or Love forget!

“ I SEE no remedy!” exclaimed Henrietta, who had hurried to Ethel on the first intelligence of this new misfortune, “ but a direct application to Sir Robert Walpole. I have tried every method to induce Lord Marchmont

to exert himself, but in vain. I have reasoned, flattered, even cried; but all of no use. But for a husband, one should never know how disagreeable people can be."

"Hush, my dearest Henrietta!" exclaimed Ethel.

"Ah! it is of no use finding fault with what I say; it is the truth."

"Which," interrupted her friend, "is not to be spoken at all times."

"Well, well," replied Henrietta, half laughing, "have your own way; which, by the by, is what you quiet people always contrive to get in some way or other."

"I have so much of my own way," replied Ethel, with a smile.

"Only with me," returned the other, laughing; "and, as it is a luxury, you make the most of it. But I'll tell you what my plan is: I shall take you, to-morrow, to Chelsea, and see if we cannot obtain an interview with Sir Robert himself, and then you can plead your own cause."

"But what could I say?" exclaimed Ethel,

turning pale at the bare mention of such a scheme."

"Say! why, my dear, you need only look," cried Henrietta; "not but what you may very well find plenty to say. You can tell him that your grandmother is just a silly old lady, who will never do any one any harm but herself. You can also ask him to behead Mr. Trevanion if ever he sets foot in England again."

"Will you never be serious?" interrupted her listener.

"I am too sad to be serious," replied Lady Marchmont: "do you know what that mood is when you would rather dwell upon any thing but your own thoughts? I am always the most seemingly lively when I am the least so in reality; and I talk nonsense when I have not courage to talk sense. I make a noise, like children, because I am frightened at finding myself in the dark — that worst of darkness, the darkness of the heart."

"This from you!" exclaimed Ethel; "you, the brilliant, the flattered——"

“All very true,” interrupted Henrietta; “but not the happy. Nature and fortune are at variance with me: the one meant me to be much better than I actually am. Every day I see more clearly the worthlessness and the vacancy of the life that I lead: my heart is chilled and hardened, and my mind frets itself. It is a dreadful feeling that of knowing you are not loved as you could love, and as you deserve to be loved; to know that all your highest and best qualities ——”

“It is a dreadful thing,” replied Ethel, with a shudder that she could not repress: her heart had gone back to its own early dream, and dwelt the more heavily on its present desolation.

Real feeling is shy of expression; and neither of the friends had courage to speak of what was nearest the heart of either. Henrietta did like to talk of Lord Marchmont, and to own how utterly she had been mistaken in believing that rank and wealth sufficed to make a happy marriage: she shamed to say how she craved for affection

and sympathy. Ethel, on her part, was equally reluctant to speak of Norbourne Courtenaye; and this silence was aided by Henrietta, who, from a feeling of delicacy, did not like to speak of Constance. How much, even in the most confidential intercourse, is kept back! the dearest of friends know each other but little.

“But,” continued Lady Marchmont, “let us speak seriously of my project; believe me, it is a good one. There, you need not say we think all projects good that originate in ourselves, I have said it for you.”

“I really,” exclaimed Ethel, “was not going to say any thing of the kind.”

“Well, it is something to be prepared: it is what you must be to-morrow.”

“But what possible influence can I have with Sir Robert?”

“Oh, a pretty woman always has influence; and they say that the all-powerful minister is as open to the charms of a pair of *beaux yeux* as any one.”

“I shall feel so frightened, and so silly!”

“ Never mind the last ; only, instead of fear, have hope. Sir Robert is a widower, who knows what effect you may produce ? ”

“ I have no ambition for such a conquest. ”

“ That is because you are not yet come to a full use of your understanding. Universal conquest should be the motto of our sex. Every woman should try to make every man she sees in love with her. ”

“ And what is she to do with all these lovers when she has them ? ”

“ Why, not much ; it is not every person who can be made useful : still, there they are if you want them. To make a man in love with you gives an instant hold on his vanity ; and with that, you can do any thing. Vanity is the real lever with which Archimedes said he could move the earth ; so, try what you can effect with Sir Robert. ”

“ I fear that will not be much, ” replied Ethel, with a disconsolate air.

“ At all events, look your very best ; and I shall call for you about twelve. Remember, the most perfect toilet ; men do not understand

the detail of dress, but they appreciate the result. I shall go to bed, and dream all night that I am prime minister instead of Sir Robert."

She staid for no answer, but left Ethel all fear and hesitation; which, however, merged in the conviction that, though she might not be able to do any thing for her grandmother, at least she ought to try her utmost; and she had great confidence in her friend. Henrietta, like all persons of active mind and lively imagination, exercised great influence over all about her. It was difficult to resist both her warmth and her kindness; the one carried you along with her, the other made it quite ungrateful not to be so carried.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CHANGES IN LONDON.

The presence of perpetual change
Is ever on the earth ;
To-day is only as the soil
That gives to-morrow birth.

Where stood the tower, there grows the weed ;
Where stood the weed, the tower :
No present hour its likeness leaves
To any future hour.

Of each imperial city built
Far on the Eastern plains,
A desert waste of tomb and sand
Is all that now remains.

Our own fair city filled with life,
Has yet a future day,
When power, and might, and majesty,
Will yet have passed away.

NOTHING could be more bright than the following morning, it was the first day of sunshine

that Ethel had seen since her arrival in London, and she was surprised to observe the change that it wrought. The river below her windows shone with that deep, dead clearness, which somewhat resembles molten lead; the little boats glided rapidly past; and more than one song, set to some popular old tune, came from the watermen as they rowed past. The sails of many a small vessel seemed like snow, and nothing could be more graceful than the way in which they glided through the arches of the distant bridge—disappeared—and then might again be recognised in the bend of the stream above. The noble dome of St. Paul's seemed bathed in the golden atmosphere, and the spires of the inferior churches glittered below.

Ethel wondered what had become of the gloom which struck her so forcibly on her first arrival. In the direction to which her own hopes pointed, the aspect was even more cheerful. The banks of the Thames had gardens intermixed with the buildings, and the architecture was of a lighter character, while the beautiful old Abbey rose like a queen

amid her court. Unless we except the Tiber, there is no river which has so much history about it as the Thames, and which is so strongly impressed with the characteristics of its nation. There are the signs of that commercial activity which has carried the flag of England round the world ; there is that cleaving to the past, which has preserved those stately churches inviolate — the glorious receptacles of the dead — and there, too, is evidence of that domestic spirit which goes back upon itself for enjoyment, and garners up its best hopes in a little space. England may be deficient in public gardens, but where are there so many private ones, each the delight of their master, and the household that have planted their shrubs, and watered their flowers? What little worlds of affection and comfort are bounded by the neat quickset-hedge, quiet and still as the nest of some singing-bird!

Ethel was in that sensitive state of mind and body, which is especially subject to external influences, and she began her toilet with a cheerfulness that had its origin in the sun

shining in at the window. What children we are in trifles! what slight things exercise an influence over us! to how much that our reason would be ashamed to acknowledge! nevertheless does it submit. Our whole nature must change; we must be less susceptible, less dependent on "blind accident," before we can shake off hopes and fears, which are almost superstitions.

For a wonder, two ladies were actually punctual to an appointment: Lady Marchmont was to her time, and Ethel did not keep her waiting a moment. A woman's first look is at the dress of her friend, and her second word is of it. Each was exceedingly satisfied with the other; which is also saying, that they were exceedingly satisfied with themselves. Lady Marchmont had on a rich flowered damask, and a white chip hat tied down with a pink kerchief; and never had she looked handsomer, for she was one whose variable complexion and mobile features were made to express interest and excitement. Ethel was in mourning: they had judged it the most fitting habit

for a petitioner ; it was certainly one most becoming to the wearer. The black set off the pure white skin and the gloss of the golden hair, and it suited the pensive and subdued expression that had become habitual to Ethel's sweet countenance.

A drive to Chelsea was a very different thing in those days to what it is in ours ; it was then literally going out of town, and the huge coach-and-six made its stately way beneath old trees, and through green and shady lanes. I cannot say much for the cheerfulness of Chelsea now-a-days : it would seem as if past gaiety always flung a deeper shadow over the places where it once held sway. The large old houses, darkened with many years, have a gloomy appearance ; and the chances of the present day are, that they have transmigrated into boarding-schools and mad-houses. No vestige remains of that luxuriant growth of almond-trees, for which it was formerly celebrated. There is something peculiarly lovely in the almond-blossom ; it brings the warmth of the rose on the last cold airs of winter, a

rich and glowing wreath, when all beside is desolate: so frail, too, and so delicate, like a fairy emblem of those sweet and gentle virtues whose existence is first known in an hour of adversity. High brick walls stand where once stood that rosy and graceful tree; and if there be one object more dreary than another, it is a high, blank brick wall: as little vestige is there left of the wide-spread common. Small houses have sprung up as rapidly as the summer grasses used to spring in the Five Fields, so notorious for robbery and murder, that even Madame de Genlis, not usually very accurate in her English *locale*, is perfectly right in making them the scene of a robber's attack.

“Troy now stands where grass once grew,” to take the liberty of reversing a quotation, and Belgrave Square has effaced the terrors of “The Five Fields;” but the road to Sir Robert Walpole's lay more to the right; yet so much are places brought together, and distances shortened now-a-days, that a visit to Chelsea was about what a visit to Richmond would be now. It was a very pleasant morn-

ing, the clear blue sky was only broken by large white clouds, whose contrast deepened the azure into purple. The trees lay on one side the road in a rich depth of shadow; on the other the golden light seemed to rain through the chequered boughs: a subtle fragrance floated on the air, and the carols of a thousand birds rose distinct above the deep murmur of the city that they had left behind.

“I cannot help,” said Ethel, “feeling in better spirits: it seems absolute ingratitude not to enjoy so lovely a morning!”

“I shall consider them as an omen,” replied Lady Marchmont: “it is very becoming to be in good spirits, and I want you to look your best. Really you ought to keep a relay of tenth cousins to die off, for black suits you remarkably well. We shall be such good contrasts; I am so glad that I have left off my mourning!”

“Your mourning!” exclaimed Ethel; “I was not aware that you had been wearing it. Who was it for?”

Lady Marchmont coloured, both with em-

barrassment and self-reproach. Embarrassment; for, with an intuitive delicacy, she had shrank from ever naming Mrs. Courtenaye to Ethel; and, with self-reproach, that, in a moment's carelessness, she could have so lightly alluded to such a painful subject. Perhaps it was best to tell Ethel at once: if ever she went into society at all, she would inevitably hear of it, and her own concealment would have the appearance of a dissimulation,—the furthest from her thoughts. Yes, it was best to tell Ethel at once.

“ I have not,” said Lady Marchmont, told you of the friendship that existed between Mrs. Courtenaye and myself, for I felt that the subject must be a painful one to you.”

How painful, the deadly paleness that overspread Ethel's face, sufficiently told. Henrietta would not observe it, but went on with her story, thus giving her friend time to recover; and, before it was done, both were mingling their tears together.

“ I have avoided the subject myself,” said Ethel at last, in a faltering tone; “ even now

it is most painful to say what I think of Mr. Norbourne's conduct: it was too cruel!"

"Do not," interrupted Henrietta, "expect the shadow of an excuse from me. It was the resentment that I felt towards himself that, singularly enough, led to my acquaintance with his wife: and I say it, even to yourself, that if ever there was an angel upon earth, it was Constance Courtenaye."

"What a strange thing it is for affection to change!" said Ethel: "even now I cannot comprehend inconstancy in love."

"I do not think," returned Henrietta, "that there was any inconstancy in the case: we must look to more worldly motives. Constance was a creature that grew upon your love, but no rival to yourself. I take it for granted that the Courtenaye property was involved, and that its heir had no means of freeing himself but by a marriage with his cousin."

"He must have known that before he knew me," said Ethel, coldly.

"I am not," exclaimed Lady Marchmont, "seeking to defend conduct as heartless as it

was cruel. Your youth, your ignorance of the world, your touching confidence in himself, should have made your happiness too sacred for a moment's trifling. But we live in a hard and unkind world, and every hour I see some new proof of how little we regard the feelings of each other; and, strange it is, that the deepest injuries are those that are the most lightly judged. The strong hand of the law is around your life and your wealth, but he who takes from you all that renders them valuable, the chances are, that his offence will find palliation and excuse; nay, that the laughers will be on his side. The heart is left alone in its desolation!"

CHAPTER XXX.

SIR ROBERT WALPOLE AND HOUSE.

This is the charm of poetry : it comes
On sad perturbed moments ; and its thoughts,
Like pearls amid the troubled waters, gleam.
That which we garnered in our eager youth,
Becomes a long delight in after years :
The mind is strengthened, and the heart refreshed
By some old memory of gifted words,
That bring sweet feelings, answering to our own,
Or dreams that waken some more lofty mood
Than dwelleth with the commonplace of life.

THE two friends were roused from the sad and subdued mood into which they had gradually sank, by the sudden stoppage of the carriage at the entrance to Sir Robert Walpole's house. The arrival took them by surprise : Ethel, who had quite lost the passing cheerfulness of the morning, turned yet paler, but Lady Marchmont was at once aroused by

the excitement of the coming interview; as she afterwards said, laughing, she felt what her beauty owed to itself!

“ I have a friend at court,” whispered she to her companion: “ last night I singled out one of Sir Robert’s secretaries, and a few smiles made him my devoted chevalier, and he promised to insure an interview.”

So saying, she gave a small billet to one of the servants; and almost before they had time to look at each other, and to see that neither ringlet nor riband were displaced by their long drive, down came the young secretary. He handed them from the carriage with an air of devoted gallantry, and led them to a small breakfast-room, which overlooked the garden.

“ Here,” said he, “ I must leave you, while I ascertain whether Sir Robert will not be too proud to receive the loveliest lady in England!”

“ Now, honour and glory to *la haute science de la coquetterie!* My rank, though I own that it is a very pretty thing to be a countess,

would have done nothing for me in this case ; my wealth, no more ; for, despite of the opposition, I do not think Sir Robert would have allowed me to offer a pair of diamond earrings, even with his favourite daughter in the background : but I flung myself on a woman's best prerogative, and *mes beaux yeux* have settled the matter at once for me. Ethel, why don't you thank me for having made such good use of them ?”

Pale and agitated, Ethel could scarcely force a smile ; and, to divert her attention from the dreaded interview, Lady Marchmont began to notice the objects around them. The window opened towards a most lovely garden, whose smooth turf and gorgeous parterres swept down to the river. A peacock stood on the grass lawn, his brilliant plumage expanded in the sunshine, while every movement shewed some change of colour. Beyond, as if to shew the infinite variety of beauty, floated two swans ; they were coming to shore, in the full glory of their arching necks and snowy wings. No marvel that the ancient Greeks,

who never lost an image of loveliness, linked them to the chariot of the Queen of Beauty!

“A swan,” said Lady Marchmont, “always gives the idea of a court-lady,—stately in her grace, ruffling in her bravery, and conscious of the floating plumes that mark her pretensions. The peacock is a coquette; it turns in the sunshine, it looks round as if to ask the conscious air of its purple and gold; but the swan sails on in majestic tranquillity, it sees the fair image of its perfect grace on the waters below, and is content:

‘It seeks not the applause of vulgar eyes.’”

“And which of these,” asked Ethel, “do you consider to be your prototype?”

“Oh, a happy mixture of both!” returned the young countess, laughing: “it is the greatest mistake possible, to be always the same; I appeal to the high authority of Pope:—

‘Ladies, like tulips, in the sunshine show,
’Tis to variety their charms they owe!’

The swan is a particularly well-bred bird, it

has a proper court and reception manner ; but there are times when you may well permit yourself the airs and graces of the peacock. Indeed, I think a very pretty system of ornithology might be got up for the use of our sex ; you, for example, have taken your lessons of the dove !”

“ Thank you !” returned her companion.

“ You would say to your lover,

‘ I disdain

All pomp when thou art by : far be the noise
Of kings and courts from us, whose gentle souls
Our kindly stars have steered another way.
Free as the forest-doves, we’ll pair together,
Flee to the arbours, grots, and flowery meads,
And in soft murmurs interchange our souls ;
Together drink the crystal of the stream,
Or taste the yellow fruit which autumn brings ;
And when the golden evening calls us home,
Wing to our downy nest, and sleep till morn.’ ”

“ I do not believe I should say any thing,”
replied Ethel ; “ I am naturally silent.”

“ Well,” exclaimed Lady Marchmont,
“ there is a great deal to be urged in favour of
a woman’s silence ; still,

‘ Speech is morning to the mind ;
It spreads the beauteous images abroad,
Which else lie furled and clouded in the soul.’

I do not know the reason,” continued Henrietta, “ but whenever I am very anxious about any thing, and I am, indeed, anxious now, my memory, by way of passing the time, always seems to fill with what were its earliest delights. How well I remember the old dark-looking volumes, from which my uncle used to evoke such beautiful creation ! How real they then seemed to be ! How devoutly I believed in these ethereal creations ! Love, hope, and happiness, then appeared to me actual existences. Alas ! as Lady Mary says, ‘ To my extreme mortification, I grow wiser every day ! ’ ”

“ I do not know,” said Ethel, with a deep sigh, “ whether I am wiser, but I am not happier than I used to be ; I am not so happy ! ”

“ The future owes you recompense,” answered her companion ; “ at all events, there is a great deal of pleasure before you, if you come out as a beauty and an heiress : I trust that Sir

Robert will decree that you shall be set in gold!"

"Let him give my poor old grandmother liberty, and I care for nothing else!"

"Well," cried Henrietta, "do not look so pale and wo-begone about it,

‘As some fair tulip, by a storm oppressed,
Shrinks up, and folds its silken arms to rest;
And, bending to the blast all pale and dead,
Hears from within the winds sing round its nest.
So shrouded up, your beauty disappears;
Unveil, my love! and lay aside your fears.’”

At that very moment the door opened, and the young secretary announced that Sir Robert Walpole would be happy to receive them.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE INTERVIEW.

“ Go see Sir Robert !

P.—See Sir Robert ! hum —

And never laugh, for all my life to come !

Seen him I have, but in his happier hour

Of social pleasure ill-exchanged for power ;

Seen him uncumbered with a venal tribe,

Smile without art, and win without a bribe.

Would he oblige me ? Let me only find

He does not think me what he thinks mankind.

Come, come ! at all I laugh he laughs, no doubt ;

The only difference is, I dare laugh out !”—POPE.

It was a small, but luxurious room, the open windows of which looked to a garden sloping down to the river, clear and sunny, as if the metropolis had been an hundred miles away. Pots, crowded with rare and fragrant exotics, were on the terrace, and filled the apartment with their odours, and the walls around were hung with some of the choicest productions

of the Italian school of art: the eye could not be raised but it must look on a flower or a picture. In the midst stood a table, covered with papers tied up with red tape, books of accounts, and open letters. At one end, that facing the window, sat England's all-powerful minister, wrapped in a loose morning-gown of purple cloth. He was a man of large size, in an indolent attitude, and with that flushed complexion which usually accompanies excess. At the first glance, you only saw one who appeared the idle and good-humoured voluptuary, whose chief attention was given to decide on the merit of rival clarets, and whose chief care was to ward off an attack of gout. Not such was the impression produced by a second and more scrutinising look, or when the face before you was lighted by expression. There was decision on the firmly compressed lip, whose subtle smile spoke a world of sarcasm; there was thought on the bold, high forehead, and the mind kindled the depths of those piercing gray eyes.

Sir Robert Walpole was essentially the man

of his time: no other minister could have maintained the House of Hanover on its then tottering throne. It was opposed to the principles of the many, and entwined with the picturesque prejudices of none. The two first Georges were not men to either dazzle or to interest a people. They were narrow-minded foreign soldiers, fettered by the small etiquettes of small courts; and looked on their accession to the British throne rather as coming into a large property, than as entering on a high and responsible office.

Sir Robert Walpole saw at once that loyalty and enthusiasm must be put out of the question; the appeal must be made to common sense, and to self-interest. A man with less worldly shrewdness would never have seen how things really stood; a man with less pliability could never have adapted himself to them. It must always be remembered, that his whole administration was one long struggle: he had to maintain his master on the throne, and himself in the ministry; and this was done by sheer force of talent.

He had no alliance among the great nobility on the one hand ; and, at all events at first, was no personal favourite with the sovereign on the other ; yet he kept his high post through one of the longest and most prosperous administrations that England has ever known. His faults were those of his day, a day singularly deficient in all high moral attributes.

Disbelief in excellence is the worst soil in which the mind can work ; we must believe, before we can hope. The political creed, of which expediency is the alpha and the omega, can never know the generous purpose, or the high result. It sees events through a microscope ; the detail is accurate, but the magnificent combination, and the glorious distance, are wholly lost. His age looked not beyond to-day ; it forgot what it had received from the past, and what it owed to the future. Rochefoucauld says, and most truly, that hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue ; now, in Walpole's time, it was not worth vice's while to pay even the poor homage of hypocrisy. Political virtue was laughed at ; or, at

best, considered a sort of Utopian dream that no one was bound to realise. Human interest will always mingle with human motive. To this hour, the great science and duty of politics is lowered by the petty leaven of small and personal advantage; still, no one can deny the vast advance that has been made. Our views are loftier, because more general; and individual selfishness is corrected by the knowledge, that good is only to be worked out on a large scale. The many have taken the place of the few; and a great principle gives something of its own strength to the mind that entertains it.

The union of philanthropy and of political science belongs to our own age: every hour the conviction is gaining ground, that happiness should be the object of legislation; and that power is given for responsibility, not for enjoyment. Power is a debt to the people: but as yet we walk with the leading-strings of prejudice, strong to confine the steps, which they never should attempt to guide. Let the child and the nation alike feel their own

way; the very stumbles will teach not only caution, but their own strength to recover from them. There is a long path yet before us; but the goal, though distant, is glorious. The time may come, when that intelligence, which is the sunshine of the moral world, will, like the sunshine of the physical world, kindle for all. There will be no tax on the window-lights of the mind. Ignorance, far more than idleness, is the mother of all the vices; and how recent has been the admission, that knowledge should be the portion of all? The destinies of the future lie in judicious education; an education that must be universal, to be beneficial.

The state of the poor in our country is frightful; and ask any one in the habit of coming in contact with the lower classes, to what is this distress mainly attributable? The answer will always be the same — the improvidence of the poor. But, in what has this improvidence originated? — in the neglect of their superiors. The poor have been left in that state of wretched ignorance, which

neither looks forward nor back ; to them, as to the savages, the actual moment is every thing : they have never been humanised by enjoyment, nor subdued by culture.

The habits of age are hopeless, but how much may be done with the children ? Labour, and severe labour, is, in some shape or other, the inevitable portion of mankind ; but there is no grade that has not its moments of mental relaxation, if it but know how to use them. Give the children of the poor that portion of education which will enable them to know their own resources ; which will cultivate in them an onward-looking hope, and give them rational amusement in their leisure hours : this, and this only, will work out that moral revolution, which is the legislator's noblest purpose. One great evil of highly civilised society is, the immense distance between the rich and the poor ; it leads, on either side, to a hardened selfishness. Where we know little, we care little ; but the fact once admitted, that there can be neither politically nor morally a good which is not universal, that we cannot

reform for a time, or for a class, but for all and for the whole, and our very interests will draw us together in one wide bond of sympathy. A mighty change, and, I believe, improvement, is at this moment going on in the world ; but the revolution, to work out its great and best end, must be even more moral than political, though the one inevitably leads to the other. Nothing can be permitted to the few ; rights and advantages were sent for all : but the few were at the fountain-head in Sir Robert Walpole's time. It is but justice to him to note how much he was in its advance. Nothing could be more enlightened than the encouragement he gave to our manufactories and colonies. Look, also, at his steady preservation of peace ; what rest and what prosperity he gave to England. The great want of his administration was, as we have said before, the want of high principle : it was the ideal of common sense, but it was nothing more. Now, mere common sense never does any thing great ; the noblest works of our nature, its exertions, its sacrifices, need

some diviner prompting: the best efforts of humanity belong to enthusiasm; but Sir Robert's was not the age of enthusiasm. The revolution, and the exile of the Stuarts, seemed to have exhausted that ardour, and that poetry, which are essentially the characteristics of English history: the chivalric, the picturesque, and the romantic, were put aside for a time to awaken into the higher hope, and more general enthusiasm, of the present. The best proof of their exalting presence among us is, that we believe and hope, where our grandfathers ridiculed and doubted. But we are keeping the fair petitioners waiting; a fault Sir Robert himself would not have committed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN AUDIENCE.

Not with the world to teach us, may we learn
The spirit's noblest lessons. Hope and Faith
Are stars that shine amid the far off heaven,
Dimmed and obscured by vapours from below ;
Impatient selfishness, and shrewd distrust,
Are taught us in the common ways of life ;
Dust is beneath our feet, and at our side
The coarse and mean, the false and the unjust ;
And constant contact makes us grow too like
The things we daily struggle with and scorn :
Only by looking up, can we see heaven.

SIR ROBERT gave one quick scrutinising glance as his fair guests entered, which was succeeded by the prolonged look of extreme admiration ; he called up his most courteous manner as he pointed to the seats nearest to his own.

“ I never,” said he, “ wished my gout with

my enemies so cordially as I do at this moment."

"Nay," replied Lady Marchmont, "I cannot help feeling obliged to it; at all events, you cannot seek safety in flight. We have stormed your stronghold, and you must yield yourself our prisoner, rescue or no rescue!"

"Not so bad as that, either," exclaimed Walpole; "I would not fly, if I could:

' Old as I am, for ladies' love unfit,
The power of beauty I remember yet!'"

"I trust," returned Henrietta, with a glance at the silent and confused Ethel, "that we shall find you a very slave to its influence."

Sir Robert smiled, and then said, in a good-humoured tone, "Well, now, fair ladies, what do you want with me? for, I suppose, you are no exceptions to the general rule; no one ever comes to me who does not want something."

"Well," replied the young countess, "you would not have us unlike every body else in the world?"

“That is what you already are!” said the minister, with an air of great gallantry.

“To be frank,” continued Lady Marchmont, having first appropriated the compliment with a very sweet smile, “we do come to ask a favour!”

“Now, the Lord have mercy upon me!” exclaimed Sir Robert, sinking back in his chair; “there is nothing in the world so unreasonable as a pretty woman. Well, let me hear what outrageous proposition is about to come from two at once!” and he half hummed through his teeth the air then in its zenith of popularity:—

“How happy could I be with either,
Were t’other dear charmer away!”

“Nay,” said Lady Marchmont, “we trust that our petition will not be so very outrageous, either. But, will you allow me to introduce my companion, Miss Churchill?”

Sir Robert’s brow darkened at once; but there was something in Ethel’s pale and subdued loveliness, which softened him; for he

asked, in a very kind tone, "And what does Miss Churchill want of me?"

"Pity and pardon!" exclaimed Ethel, in a low, but distinct whisper.

"I thought how it was!" cried Walpole, "those fantastic coxcombs have all the luck with you. Here is a goose—by Jove! I am calumniating that respectable bird: Trevanion has not even the brains of a goose—an idiot tries to unsettle a whole kingdom, does contrive to turn the heads of some worthy people, and here are two of the prettiest women in England coming to beg for his head, as if it were worth keeping on his shoulders!"

"You are quite wrong," interrupted Lady Marchmont; "as far as Mr. Trevanion is concerned, you have our full permission to hang him out of the way at your earliest convenience!"

"You only say this," returned Sir Robert, fixing a penetrating glance on Ethel, to whose cheek the colour rose vividly, "because you know he has escaped! The jailor was fool enough to have a daughter, and she was fool

enough to think, because a man was handsome, he ought not to be hanged; so they took advantage of a dark night, and a smuggler's boat, and are gone to France and the devil together! Don't faint; at least, not here!" added he abruptly, to Ethel, whose fading blush left her paler than before: "your lover is not more inconstant than all men are: but I see how it is; women are all alike, they would rather have a lover hanged, than that another should save him from the gallows!"

A quick temper feeds on its own indulgence, and Sir Robert had talked himself into being angry; however, Lady Marchmont took advantage of the pause to say, "Mr. Trevanion has nothing to do with our visit; it is on Mrs. Churchill's account that we have ventured to address you. We have heard that she is to be imprisoned: it is for her sake that we implore your compassion!"

"My grandmother," exclaimed Ethel eagerly, "pines for her own home: I am sure a prison will kill her. Consider, sir, she is an old woman, she will not trouble you long!"

“ An old woman ! ” exclaimed the minister, whom an unlucky twinge made at that moment doubly impatient, “ old women are the plague of my life ! So I am to send Mrs. Churchill down to the very spot where a treasonable correspondence is most easily managed ; and by the ease with which she gets out of a first scrape, give her all possible encouragement to get into another. Well, I was quite right in asking what preposterous request had you come here about ! ”

“ I see, ” returned Lady Marchmont, “ that old women are no favourites of yours ; but if you would extend your clemency to Mrs. Churchill, I think she has seen her folly, and will leave conspiracies to themselves in future. ”

“ And who, ” asked Sir Robert, “ will become sureties for her future good conduct ? ”

This appeared an easy question to answer ; and from the early friends of their house, Ethel selected two neighbouring gentlemen, to whom she had always been accustomed to look with the utmost respect. She could scarcely have made a worse selection, for they were two most

notorious Jacobites. The moment Sir Robert heard the names, "Really, this is too bad!" exclaimed he in a rage, ringing a bell violently that stood by him on the table: "ladies, I can waste no more time in listening to any such nonsense. Good morning!"

There was no resource, the minister would not even look towards them, so absorbed had he suddenly become in the papers before him. The door opened; and, in another moment, they found themselves in the vestibule, where the young secretary was waiting to hand them to the carriage. He was too accustomed to discontented suitors not to see at a glance that the interview had been one of disappointment, and he was too discreet to ask any questions; a discretion, by the by, of all kinds the rarest.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A FRIEND AT COURT.

I did not know till she was lost,
How much she was beloved ;
She knows it in that better world
To which she is removed.

I feel as she had only sought
Again her native skies ;
I look upon the heavens, and seem
To meet her angel eyes.

Pity, and love, and gentle thoughts,
For her sake, fill my mind ;
They are the only part of her
That now is left behind.

THE disappointed petitioners stood, for a few moments, on the terrace while waiting for their carriage : they stood in complete silence ; Ethel the most vexed, Lady Marchmont the most surprised. Henrietta felt like a dethroned

divinity, refusal and rebuff were such very novel things to her, excepting from her husband ; and from husbands they come as matters of course. But she was a petted, spoiled beauty ; and to be dismissed in such an unceremonious manner was beyond her comprehension : she no longer wondered that Lord Marchmont was in opposition. As for Ethel, she was quite bewildered : she had felt such implicit reliance on Henrietta's success, that the disappointment was doubly bitter, because wholly unexpected.

They had stood both so completely absorbed in their disagreeable reverie, that neither perceived the approach of a stranger, who was about to pass them with a slight but courteous bow, when he caught sight of Henrietta, and immediately stopped.

“ This is an unexpected pleasure ! ” exclaimed he. “ What good fortune blows Lady Marchmont hither ? ”

“ Good fortune, do you call it ? ” cried Henrietta : “ why I can scarcely refrain from venting my rage even upon poor, unoffending you. Good ! my Lord ; don't expect even a civil

word from me. It is a very disagreeable thing to agree with one's husband ; but to-night I move my patches, and become 'Tory.'

"Nay," replied Lord Norbourne, for he was the stranger, "Sir Robert can have done nothing to merit so severe a sentence. Come, let me hear your grievance. He has bought some picture you wanted, or refused a slip from some plant, without which, of course, you cannot exist for an hour?"

"Dear Lord Norbourne," said Henrietta, "my business is of a much more serious nature. I leave it to your own kindness whether it shall or not be intruded upon you."

"Lady Marchmont knows," replied he, "that it is no commonplace expression of civility, when I say, let me have the happiness of serving you whether it be in a little or great thing."

"I equally know that I may take you at your word," said Henrietta ; "and, as a first step, as it is her history that I am about to tell, will you allow me to introduce my young friend ? Miss Churchill, Lord Norbourne."

It would be difficult to say on which party the name of the other produced the greatest effect. With Ethel there was the one association: this, then, was Courtenaye's uncle, whose daughter he had married. The whole past rose vividly before her — all her sorrow, all her suffering. The tears started, but pride repressed them; or, rather, pride is no name for the sensitive and shrinking feeling which trembles even at compassion for its misery. It was very painful to Ethel to seek aid from Lord Norbourne. Had she consulted her own wishes, she would have withdrawn at once; but it was a sacred duty to advance her grandmother's cause by every possible means: and, moreover, was not the listener in complete ignorance of the agitation he caused by his presence? She little knew how well Lord Norbourne was acquainted with her name; or how large a share he had had in her unhappiness. Her appearance produced on him an emotion which even his calm and polished manner could scarcely conceal. She brought to him the image of Constance; thus at once unlock-

ing the spring of his kindest and best feelings. He felt at once what he owed of amends to the young and fair creature, whose beauty wore such obvious trace of suffering — of suffering, too, that he had inflicted. His better nature was awakened on her behalf; he longed to serve her, to be kind to her; he felt as if such service and such kindness were a worthy offering to the memory of his own angel child. Unconscious of all this, Lady Marchmont was equally surprised and delighted to find what interest Lord Norbourne took in her story. Like all women who seem to have an imperative necessity in their nature to give a romantic reason for every thing, she began to think that his lordship had suddenly fallen in love with the beautiful girl to whose cause he was giving such earnest attention.

“Well,” said Lord Norbourne, as Henrietta concluded her narrative, “I trust that Lady Marchmont will not be driven to the desperate necessity of agreeing with her husband, even in politics. Just walk round the lawn for two or

three minutes, and let me try my influence with Sir Robert."

He left them without waiting; and Henrietta, after following him with eyes that looked the most eloquent thanks, turned to her companion, exclaiming,—

"I cannot say much for the success of my first scheme, that you should be the second Lady Walpole; but what do you say to being the third Lady Norbourn? but, I warn you, in the last case we shall be rivals."

The expression of Ethel's face quite checked her vivacity. For the first time it struck Lady Marchmont how much her friend was altered. Ethel had not even heard what she said, so completely was she lost in her own thoughts. She leant against the balustrade of the terrace, her gaze fixed on the river, but seeing it not. The flush of excitement had left her deadly pale; while the blue eyes looked unnaturally large, with a sad set expression, as if haunted by the perpetual presence of one oppressive thought. Henrietta

felt, whose image was present to Ethel: she said nothing; but pressing her companion's arm kindly, drew her onwards, and walked along the terrace in silence. But Henrietta's imagination was too acute and too buoyant not to arrange a whole future during their walk. She reconciled Ethel and Courtenaye; she gave Lord Norbourn's consent to their marriage; and was just ending, like a fairy tale, with — “and they lived very happy for the rest of their lives,” when Lord Norbourn returned.

“I expect a charming welcome,” said he, “for I return successful: Sir Robert relents. I have offered to become security that Mrs. Churchill has done with treasonable correspondence. She will not yet be permitted to return to the Manor House: it is too convenient for ‘treasons, stratagems,’ &c.; and it is as well not to be put in the way of temptation: but she will be allowed perfect liberty in London. Something of a fine is still talked of; but even that, I hope, will be remitted.”

“How kind you are!” exclaimed Lady Marchmont; but Ethel found no voice to

speaking. Lord Norbourne took her hand very kindly, and placed her in the carriage.

“ You must allow me,” said he, “ to call on Mrs. Churchill. I flatter myself I shall be able to convince her that, without compromising her principles, the best thing that she can do will be not to attempt carrying them into practice.”

He turned down the very terrace where they had just been walking ; and though, certainly, there was as little resemblance as could well be between himself and Lady Marchmont, yet their thoughts flowed in precisely the same channel. Chilled and hardened, as it had been, by constant contact with the world, yet Lord Norbourne’s was inherently a high and generous nature. To such, atonement is a necessity and an enjoyment. Ethel’s happiness seemed to him like a sad sweet debt, owing to the memory of his lost Constance.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE DEAD.

Who are the Spirits watching by the dead ?
Faith, from whose eyes a solemn light is shed ;
And Hope, with far-off sunshine on the head.

The influence of the dead is that of Heaven ;
To it a majesty of power is given,
Working on earth with a diviner leaven.

To them belongs all high and holy thought :
The mind, whose mighty empire they have wrought ;
And grief, whose comfort was by angels brought.

And gentle Pity comes, and brings with her
Those pensive dreams that their own light confer ;
While Love stands watching by the sepulchre.

CONFIDENCE is inseparable from human nature. Never was temper so reserved but it has its moments of unbending — moments when the full heart unlocks its secret fountains, and

tells of emotions unsuspected, and thoughts hitherto concealed by the guarded brow and practised lip. Now, of all times and places calculated for confidence, there is no time like evening ; no place like sitting over the fire.

Much may be said in favour of a long walk on a summer twilight ; the heart opens to the soft influences of the lovely hour ; but those very influences distract us from ourselves. The eye is caught by the presence of the beautiful : the violets, half hidden in the long grass ; a branch of hawthorn, heavy with its fragrant load ; a cloud, on which the crimson shadow lingers to the last :—these are too fair to be passed by unnoticed ; they take us from our discourse with a half unconscious delight. Moreover, before the calm and subduing aspect of nature, human cares feel their own vanity. The lulling music of leaves, stirred only by the gentle wind, enters into the soul ; and the sweet, deep drawn, breath brings its own tranquillity. Passionate and present, indeed, must be the despair that resists the harmony of such an hour ; but the quiet chamber, and the secluded hearth, have

an atmosphere of another kind. The objects around have been seen so often, that they have at last become, as it were, unseen ; their familiarity does not carry us out of ourselves, for all their associations are our own. They remind us of nothing in which we were not the principal actors ; if they call up the image of a friend, they call up our own also. Not a chair nor a table but has some link with our by-gone hours. Here we read, modifying the thoughts of others with our own ; there we wrote ; and how much is implied in that little phrase ! how the whole world of inward existence passes before us, while putting only a small portion of it on paper ! With how much is every letter combined, whether of business, or of affection ! The room is filled with the ghosts of departed hours, often unnoticed and unremembered ; but, when recalled by some chance circumstance, how vivid, and how distinct do they rise upon the memory !

The chamber in which Lord Norbourne was seated, was especially one of this kind ; it had been his own room for years, and was

crowded with all that marked his character and his taste. It was not large, but of unusual height, and fitted up with great costliness. The bookcases were ebony, inlaid with green morocco, and so were the tables, and the curtains were of crimson velvet. They were closely drawn, but you could hear a gentle rain beating against the window panes. There were few pictures, but each a masterpiece. A sunny landscape of Claude Lorraine's, contrasted the stormy darkness of one by Salvator Rosa; while the spiritual loveliness of a "Madonna," by Guido, was opposed to the passionate beauty of a "Fornarini," by Raphael. Only one modern picture was admitted, and that was a likeness of Constance, painted under her father's especial instructions. It was not taken in the dress of the time; but a loose white robe was gathered in with a few simple folds at the waist. The long hair of the palest gold was just parted on the forehead, and then fell unbound to the waist. Not an ornament of any kind was introduced, only one white thin hand held a bunch of lilies. The likeness was

very strong ; and the artist had caught, with great felicity, the sweet expression, the purity and the fragility which were Constance's great charm. You believed in angels as you gazed upon her face. On either side of the hearth sat Lord Norbourne and Mr. Courtenaye ; they had dined together, and the wine and fruit still stood on the small table drawn between them, where strawberries and cherries were not in strict accordance with the cheerful fire. But Lord Norbourne was greatly in advance of his age, and, as to the matter of that, of our own. He had no vague false notions of beginning fires in November, and ending them in May ; but had arrived at the philosophical conclusion, that there are very few evenings, in all the year, that a fire is not a consummation of domestic felicity in England most devoutly to be wished.

Norbourne had been exerting himself to amuse his uncle, but with little success ; and the conversation languished till the servants had left the room.

“ I have seemed very ungracious,” said

Lord Norbourne ; “ but I am too much occupied with one subject to be able to talk on any other.”

“ What is it ? ” exclaimed Courtenaye : “ I will, at least, promise to be an attentive listener.”

“ That I do not doubt,” replied his uncle, with a forced smile ; “ for I am going to talk about your marrying again.”

Norbourne coloured ; and, after a moment’s silence, said,—

“ This is a very painful subject. For both our sakes, might it not be avoided ? ”

“ No,” returned the other ; “ the confidence that now exists between us, and to which I cling as the last happiness of my life, must be unbroken by even the shadow of a restraint. Would you wish it otherwise, Norbourne ? ”

“ My dearest uncle ! ” exclaimed his listener.

“ We shall feel more at ease,” continued Lord Norbourne, “ when each fully understands the feelings of the other. I have shrunk, I own, from the subject ; but an interview that

I had this morning induces me to defer it no longer. I saw Miss Churchill to-day."

"Ethel!" exclaimed Norbourne, his strong and uncontrollable emotion betraying the power that her name still had over him: he tried to say something more, but the words died on his lips.

"I never saw so lovely a creature," continued his uncle: "I do not now wonder that you found it so hard to forgive me. Ah, I was wrong, very wrong!"

"My dear uncle," interrupted the other, "let there be some remembrances buried for ever in oblivion between us."

"Not yet," returned Lord Norbourne. "I feel what I owe you; the future must repay the past."

"I cannot bear you to speak thus," interrupted Courtenaye. "When I think of that gentle creature whose sweet eyes are now looking upon us, as if indeed they looked from heaven; when I recall all your kindness, and all your affection,—I feel, indeed, that you have a right to dispose of my whole existence."

“ I should be glad to do so for your happiness,” replied his uncle, in a tone of earnest affection : “ I always loved you, but the last few months have drawn us so much together. There is a tie between us nothing can break.”

“ Nothing, indeed !” replied Norbourne, taking his uncle’s hand.

Both were silent for a few minutes, when Lord Norbourne resumed the conversation.

“ But you do not ask me how, when, and where ?—have you no curiosity to hear where I met with Miss Churchill ?”

Norbourne smiled, and his uncle continued.

“ Of all places in the world, at Sir Robert Walpole’s villa at Chelsea.”

His listener looked astonished, and added, in a whisper,—“ You call her Miss Churchill ; how is it that you know her by that name rather than her present one ?”

“ Why, Miss Churchill is her present name ; but I forget that you know nothing of her history. That singularly foolish old lady, her grandmother, got up a sort of caricature conspiracy, and Miss Churchill was to have

been married to a coxcombical Jacobite, of the name of Trevanion ; but he was arrested in the church, though he has since escaped by means of the jailor's daughter."

" But what could bring Miss Churchill to London ?"

" Why, her grandmother came off at once to see what friends she could find ; but a foolish visit to the Duchess of Buckingham, some indiscreet letters, and Mr. Trevanion's escape, made Mrs. Churchill the object of serious suspicion. Lady Marchmont — it is extraordinary how women do learn every thing! — heard that an arrest was intended, and what does she and her fair friend do, but set off, like two errant damsels in a romance, to obtain a pardon from Sir Robert."

" And how did they succeed ?" asked Norbourne.

" Why, just as might be expected," replied his uncle, " not at all : Walpole thought them two fools for their pains ; and, irritated by the gout, dismissed them with as little ceremony as possible."

“ And can nothing be done for the poor old lady ?” exclaimed Courtenaye, eagerly.

“ And the pretty young one ?” returned his lordship, laughing. “ Why, I have been a complete Amadis of Gaul this morning, rescuing distressed beauty, if not from peril, from perplexity. I met Lady Marchmont on the terrace, not a little surprised to meet her ladyship there.”

“ Lord Marchmont is in the opposition, is he not ?” asked his nephew.

“ Yes, for the time being ; not that he knows very well what he is. We care little for him, his solemn lordship is one of those never long attached to any party, it being quite impossible to come up to their exaggerated ideas of self-importance. They reckon time by a series of personal affronts ; for an aptitude to take offence is the constant characteristic of their low, dull vanity—a vanity never satisfied. Still it surprised me to meet Lady Marchmont at Chelsea.”

“ I never,” said Norbourne, “ observed any similarity of opinion between the brilliant countess and her lord and master.”

“True,” returned the other; “but you must have noted, as well as I have done, a careful avoidance of any thing like direct opposition to Lord Marchmont; therefore, I certainly wondered at her appearance.”

“But how did she interest you in their favour?” asked his nephew.

“By introducing Miss Churchill,” said Lord Norbourne, earnestly. “Norbourne, till I saw that lovely face—so pale, so sad—I never felt how little had her happiness been considered. I cannot tell you how I was touched by her appearance;—what a relief it was to me when I found that I could serve her.”

“My dearest uncle,” exclaimed Norbourne, “how little are people in general aware of how kind you are!”

“I care for the opinion of people in general,” replied his companion, “precisely what it is worth—nothing! Every hour my contempt increases for the herd of mankind. False, flattering, and cowardly,—treating them ill is only giving them their deserts, and they treat

you all the better in consequence. Trample them underfoot, and then, being in their proper places, they know how to behave."

"It is very discouraging," answered the other, "to find how often kindness is thrown away; but it will not be so in the present instance."

"That is a hint, is it not, to go on with my story?" asked Lord Norbourne, smiling. "Well, I found Sir Robert in a very bad humour: some silly vote, and still sillier speech, of Lord Marchmont had irritated him the night before; and the names of the very gentlemen to whom Miss Churchill had referred as their securities, enraged him to the last degree. It was owing to their opposition that our member lost his election for the county."

"How unfortunate!" cried Courtenaye.

"'All's well that ends well,'" replied his uncle. "Sir Robert was, at first, very much surprised at my taking up the case, and obviously did not know to the influence of which lady he was to attribute it. I believe his opposition, in the first instance, originated in the

fear that, by thus acting, I was making a fool of myself."

"An alarm as unnecessary, as the alarms our friends entertain on our account generally are. A friend is never alarmed for us in the right place. But how did you manage to convince Sir Robert that you were in your sober senses?"

"Why, I did what I always do," returned his uncle, "to a man for whom I have a respect, — I told him the truth. I frankly avowed that I took an interest in Miss Churchill, and on your account."

Norbourne coloured, from mixed sensations ; still hope was the predominant one.

"I believe that the whole business," continued his uncle, "is now settled. I do not think that you will regret Mrs. Churchill being obliged to remain in town for some time to come ; and if the fine does dip somewhat deeply into the old lady's hoards, it matters little ; for whoever you marry will be unto me as a daughter."

Norbourne could only look at his uncle

with grateful affection ; and Lord Norbourne continued :—

“ I think, Norbourne, that I could do anything for yourself ; yet shall I tell you that my present line of conduct does not arise from my own prompting.”

“ To whose then ?” exclaimed Norbourne, in undisguised astonishment.

“ I am,” answered Lord Norbourne, “ but fulfilling the last wishes of our poor Constance. You do not even now know how precious your happiness was to that gentle and loving heart.”

“ I cannot bear,” exclaimed Norbourne, “ to think of happiness, and Constance in her grave. Ah, if she did but know the sorrow I have felt for her sake.”

“ If,” returned her father, “ according to her own sweet belief, the departed yet watch the beloved on earth, how would she wish to soothe an unavailing regret ! But you must now see a letter I found, addressed to me, after her death.”

Lord Norbourne rose from his seat ; and,

unlocking one of the closets, took from it a small ivory casket. "You open it," said he in a broken voice, "by touching this spring. Read the letter it contains, and return it to me to-morrow. It is a treasure with which I would not part for any thing in this world."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LAST LETTER.

Strong as the death it masters, is the hope
That onward looks to immortality :
Let the frame perish, so the soul survive,
Pure, spiritual, and loving. I believe
The grave exalts, not separates, the ties
That hold us in affection to our kind.
I will look down from yonder pitying sky,
Watching and waiting those I loved on earth
Anxious in heaven, until they too are there.
I will attend your guardian angel's side,
And weep away your faults with holy tears ;
Your midnight shall be filled with solemn thought :
And when, at length, death brings you to my love,
Mine the first welcome heard in Paradise.

NORBOURNE delayed opening the casket till alone in his room ; and even then he lingered. There was something exquisitely painful in the memories that crowded upon his mind : a thou-

sand of Constance's daily acts of affection rose before him: never till this moment had he felt them unrequited; but now they were remembered like a reproach. He could not accuse himself of a moment's unkindness, or even coldness; from the hour that they stood at the altar together, her happiness had been the most sacred and the most tender care in life; but now he felt as if he had wronged her in not loving her entirely. The image of another had been in his heart, — might not its shadow have sometimes fallen upon her? Any occupation was better than this mood of morbid dejection; and, suddenly drawing the lamp towards him, he opened the casket. The first things he saw were the long tresses of fair hair, which her father had had cut off after Constance's death. Norbourne's heart smote him, that he had not thought of them as a sad memorial. His eyes filled with tears, as he took up the glittering lengths. Their pale gold was lovely as ever; but there was something in the touch from which he involuntarily recoiled. It is strange the difference

between the hair of the living and the dead : the one so soft, so fragrant, and falling ; the other so harsh, so scentless, and so straight. In nothing is the presence of mortality more strongly marked.

There was a perfume hung about the casket ; but it came not from that coldly golden hair : it rose from the withered leaves of some flowers, whose scent outlived their colours. Norbourne at once recognised the riband he himself had put round the roses the night of that festival whose end had been so fatal.

“ Alas ! ” exclaimed he, “ how tenderly has her father garnered these tokens of the past ! ” and again he felt as if he ought to have done likewise.

Below these lay the letter. Norbourne could see that it had been often read ; and on it were the trace of tears — tears shed by the proud, the reserved Lord Norbourne. He felt that his uncle did, indeed, love him as his own son, or never would he have let him look on these proofs of the tenderest sorrow,—the most gentle affection. He took up the letter : well

did he know the delicate and graceful handwriting; but he saw that the characters were tremulous, and it had obviously been written at different times. How much did it betray of the heart struggling for expression with bodily weakness! At first the page swam before him; but, with a strong effort, he at last read the contents.

LETTER OF CONSTANCE TO HER FATHER.

MY DEAREST FATHER,—Before you begin the following letter, I entreat your patient kindness if there be aught in its contents to grieve or to displease you. If you could know the relief that it is to me to write, you would, I know, forgive me.

Before you read this letter, the child whom your affection has made so happy, will be cold in the grave. Read it, my beloved parent, as the expression of my latest wish on earth—the wish that will be next my heart when it ceases to beat. I know that I am dying; and but for your sake, my father, I could be glad to

die. You know not how weary I often feel, nor the cold sickness that often comes over me. The day is very long, and the night yet longer. Things that I used to love, now only fatigue me. I gaze into the sunshine, and my eyes close with its brightness. I look upon my flowers only to ask whether they or I shall be the first to fade. There was a time when I was sad to think of death, when I shuddered at the thought of the dark and cold tomb: but God, in his mercy, allowed not such terror to last. I used to shrink from the grave, where love was not; but I now feel that his love is with us even there. Few are the ties that now bind me to this weary world, and they will be with me in eternity.

My father, it is your old age left childless that is my abiding sorrow. I fear your proud and self-sufficing nature. Who will force you to love when I am gone? You will be unhappy, and your unhappiness will take the seeming of sternness and of sarcasm: and yet, if you would allow it, there is one who would love you almost as much as I have done. Nor-

bourne has for you an affection that but few sons have for their father. He admires, he understands you ; and confidence on your part, and return, will make him your affectionate and devoted child. I sometimes hope that it will be so, for my sake. You will grieve together over my loss ; and grief subdues and draws those who share it together.

And now, dearest father, for what I long, yet dread to say. Norbourne is young ; he will, I believe, I hope, marry again. May she whom he marries be to you as a daughter ! Let her be such ; you can make any one love you whom you choose. I have long felt that it was your influence over my cousin that made me his wife ; for he never loved me. Do not start at this : I was a child when I married — a child in every thing but my passionate love ; but I grew to womanhood rapidly. I seem to have lived years, so much have I thought and felt during the last few months. I have learnt the secret of others from my own heart, and that taught me that my cousin had for me only

the affection of a brother. How unlike my own feverish, untranquil, and fearful fondness for him! yet how kind he always was! how tender in his even feminine care of me! Hour after hour has he turned from all study, all employment, all amusement, to watch and soothe my sick fancies. I could not help being happy in his presence; and yet his absence has often been a relief. I have wept with painful gratitude over the favourite flowers that, every morning, he would allow no one to gather for me but himself. Still there lacked that sympathy which taught me to read his thoughts without a word. Nothing but love can answer to love; no affection, no kindness, no care, can supply its place: it is its own sweet want.

Do you remember my fainting at Marble Villa? A sudden and dreadful jealousy of Lady Marchmont entered my mind. God only can forgive me for all I then thought! for God only can know the agony of my suffering. A moment's frantic misery led to an explanation

with Lady Marchmont ; and I learnt that my wretchedness had been vain. But not with my jealousy of her, who was afterwards my dear and true friend, did the knowledge depart that such jealousy had brought. I could not observe Norbourne's feelings without perceiving how different they were to mine. There was an anxiety about his kindness, which too often appeared as if it had something to make up to its object.

From discovering that he did not love me, it was but a step to finding that he loved another. I have watched him read, first earnestly ; then the page has been closed unconsciously, and he remained lost in a gloomy reverie. I have opened the volume when he left the room, and found that the record was of ill-placed affection. Often have I noted how he shrank away from any conversation that turned on those tender, yet deep sentiments on which I could have talked to him for ever : and, alas !—worst of all to bear—I have bent over his feverish and troubled sleep : there was

a name breathed amid his dreams, but that name was not mine.

My father, I charge you with the care of his future happiness : think that it is the last, the dearest wish of your child. In the mutual affection between you and my husband, I see the resource of your old age. His ties will become yours, and a new growth of kindly interests and warm affections will spring up under the shadow of the old. If, as I sometimes hope, the departed spirit is permitted to retain in another world those affections which made its heaven on earth, how tenderly will I watch over you !

My beloved father, our parting is but for a season. Not in vain have these divine words been spoken, whose comfort is with me even now. I die in their glorious faith, and in their cheering hope. If I die, as I trust to do, watching the faces that I love to the last, these words shall be my latest gift to you, my father ; they will bring their own power.

I am very faint, I can write no more. I commend my dearest husband to you ; and that God may bless, and re-unite us all, is the latest prayer of

Your affectionate child,

CONSTANCE.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A REQUEST REFUSED.

Age is a dreary thing when left alone :
It needs the sunshine brought by fresher years ;
It lives its youth again while seeing youth,
And childhood brings its childhood back again.

But for the lonely and the aged man
Left to the silent hearth, the vacant home
Where no sweet voices sound, no light steps come
Disturbing memory from its heaviness —
Wo for such lot ! 'tis life's most desolate !
Age needeth love and youth to cheer the path —
The short dark pathway leading to the tomb.

“ Is Lord Marchmont not yet come in ? ” asked the countess, with a degree of impatience which her husband's return was not commonly in the habit of calling forth.

“ No, my lady,” replied the servant.

“ You will let me know the moment he comes in.”

“ Yes, my lady ;” and he disappeared.

“ How I do hate,” exclaimed Henrietta, “ those mechanical ‘ yeses ’ and ‘ noes ! ’ I wish every body else was as impatient as myself. Though, perhaps,” added she, half-smiling, “ it is as well that they are not.”

A few hasty turns up and down the luxurious room, and she resumed her seat, and began again to read the letter, which lay open on a table beside. It was from Sir Jasper ; and, for the first time, he asked her to come and see him. The letter was written with cheerful words ; but, to the quick eye of affection, there lacked the cheerful spirit.

“ It is selfish,” wrote her uncle, “ to ask you to leave all your gaiety, all your triumphs, to share an old man’s solitude ; but I wish it very much : and my dear child must, indeed, be changed, if it be not a pleasure to gratify that wish. Summer is now in great beauty, but I cannot enjoy our green walks without a companion ; and I want you to see how all your favourite flowers have prospered under my care. You must come and be grateful.

Ethel Churchill — it was very kind of her to write to me—says, that I shall find you equally altered and improved ; so you see, dear Henrietta, I need to refresh my memory even of you. Come you must,—or, rather, you will ; for I have already made all kinds of preparations for your arrival.”

“ Why,” exclaimed Henrietta, “ have I left it to him to ask me ? why have I not proposed going to him ? why have I allowed Lord Marchmont’s trivial excuses for delay, to postpone a visit which would have made my uncle so happy ? But I will go at once.”

Again she began to read her letter, when, suddenly letting it fall, she turned pale. A terrible fear had entered into her mind : the handwriting was certainly more tremulous than usual. He was ill, and would not tell her so. At once her imagination conjured up a thousand shapes of suffering. She saw her uncle—sick, lonely, and pining for his child. She could not bear the picture ; and, covering her face with her hands, as if to exclude it, began to weep bitterly.

At this moment Lord Marchmont entered the room in a very bad humour; for one of the servants, sent by Lady Marchmont to seek him, had, by giving his message aloud, that Lady Marchmont requested him to come home immediately, as she wanted to speak to him on a matter of the utmost consequence, placed him under the decent and disagreeable necessity of returning at once, before a bet was decided, whether his own cook, or that of Lord Montagle's, would prepare a single dish to the greatest perfection. The jury of taste had been impanelled, and here was he summoned away ten minutes before the dishes came up. It was a trying circumstance, if not to his philosophy, to his temper.

“What is the matter?” asked he, on entering the drawing-room, and finding Henrietta sobbing; “what can induce you to disfigure yourself so by crying?”

“My uncle is ill, very ill!” exclaimed Henrietta, speaking, however, more from the fears of her excited fancy than from the actual contents of the letter.

“ Sir Jasper ill !” replied Lord Marchmont, with the most decorous expression of distress ; “ I am grieved to hear of it. When did you receive the truly painful intelligence ?”

“ Oh, may I not go to him at once ?” cried Henrietta, alive to nothing but her own alarm.

“ I should, of course, however ill-timed and inconvenient to myself, wish you to do what was most proper on the occasion. But you know,” continued he, “ that you are apt to exaggerate : perhaps you will allow me again to repeat my question of, When did you receive the information of Sir Jasper’s alarming illness ?”

“ Read his letter,” exclaimed the countess, wringing her hands impatiently.

Lord Marchmont deliberately took up the epistle, first smoothing, with great care, a crease that had been made by folding it up in a different form to the original one. Twice, then, he changed its position, till the light fell upon it exactly as he liked ; while Lady Marchmont watched him in a perfect fever of anxiety.

“There is nothing relative to indisposition in the first page,” said he, after taking time enough, as his wife thought, to have read twenty letters. “But Sir Jasper has a great talent for epistolary correspondence — to be sure he has nothing else to do; but my time is of great importance. Perhaps your ladyship will have the kindness to point out the passage referring to his illness.”

“Read the end,” said Henrietta, more feverish, and more irritable every moment.

Lord Marchmont slowly turned over the pages, smoothing them as he went along. “I cannot say much for your ladyship’s care of Sir Jasper’s letters.”

“Never mind; only, do read it,” interrupted the countess.

Again his lordship began his long and deliberate perusal, while Henrietta watched the slow motion of his eyes with a degree of impetuosity she could scarcely repress.

“Why, surely,” cried she, “you are not going to read it again!”

“Indeed, I need to do so; for I cannot

find that Sir Jasper makes the slightest allusion to his illness."

"He is too kind, too good!" exclaimed Lady Marchmont: "I know he would not alarm me for the world; but I see it in his unsteady writing."

"Sir Jasper is advanced in life, you could not expect his hand to be as steady as mine," returned her husband, very calmly.

"But his anxiety to see me," interrupted Henrietta.

"Is exceedingly natural. There never was any thing so dull as Meredith Place. I shall never forget the few weeks that I spent there."

"It was our honeymoon," thought his beautiful wife to herself; but she said nothing.

"I really must, once for all" added Lord Marchmont, in an unusually solemn tone, "request that your ladyship will not give way to these whims and caprices. Nothing could be more inconvenient than the way in which you sent for me this morning. You never consider what you interrupt: and, after all, Sir Jasper's illness exists only in your own fancy."

“ Well, well,” returned Lady Marchmont, whose patience was fairly exhausted, “ at least you will allow me to judge for myself. I purpose leaving London to-night.”

“ Leaving London to-night!” ejaculated her husband—are you mad? Why, we dine at the prince’s to-day.”

“ What do I care for the prince?” cried Henrietta : “ I must and will go to my uncle.”

“ *Must* and *will*, Lady Marchmont, are words which my own proper sense of my authority cannot permit you to use. I beg to state, definitely, that I cannot permit you to leave London at present. It is very obvious how much his royal highness admires you ; and court favour is too fleeting not to be made the most of while it lasts.”

“ But think how anxious my poor uncle is to see me!” said Henrietta, in a most pleading tone.

“ It is fortunate that you have a calmer judgment to direct you than your own!” replied Lord Marchmont. “ I have an idea ——”

“Have you really?” thought Henrietta; “take care of it, for it is your first!”

“Instead of going to see Sir Jasper, let us ask him to come and see us: of course, the invitation ought to be from the master of the house; I shall, therefore, write to him myself.”

“My uncle will never leave home,” cried Henrietta.

“I am sure,” returned Lord Marchmont, “there is nothing so very delightful in Meredith Place, that I remember, to induce its master always to stay there; so let me beg you to compose yourself. No woman who has the least respect for herself should ever cry, it is peculiarly unbecoming; and now I have the honour to wish you a good morning. Have you any commands when I write to your uncle?”

“None!” replied Henrietta; and, as the door closed, she flung herself back among the cushions, exclaiming, “Oh, that I had never married!”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE TRUTH OF PRESENTIMENTS.

I felt my sorrow ere it came,
As storms are felt on high,
Before a single cloud denote
Their presence on the sky.

The heart has omens deep and true,
That ask no aid from words ;
Like viewless music from the harp,
With none to wake its chords.

Strange, subtle, are these mysteries,
And linked with unknown powers,
Marking mysterious links that bind
The spirit world to ours.

HENRIETTA wept long and bitterly ; in vain did she try to gain some composure by reading and re-reading Sir Jasper's letter. True, there was not even an allusion to illness in any way ; parts were even playful in their cheerfulness ; still she felt assured that there was something

unusual in the earnestly expressed wish to see her. Her uncle had always been so reluctant to urge his claims on her time or attention, so fearful of abridging even her slightest pleasure, that it was no ordinary motive that induced him to urge her visit.

“ Alas ! ” exclaimed she, “ what a mistake is our endeavour after happiness ! I have all that haunted my childish dreams in our lonely woods ; I have wealth, rank, beauty, and wretchedness ! I pine for love, and none love me, save one kind old man, and he is far away, suffering solitude I might share, and sickness I could soothe ! ”

The time had passed quicker than she had thought ; and a message from Lord Marchmont, conveying the important intelligence that he was gone to dress, and particularly requesting that her ladyship would be punctual, was the first thing that roused her. She started from her seat.

“ Perhaps, ” thought she, “ if I shew Marchmont a readiness to oblige him to-day, and make myself very agreeable, to-morrow I

may renew the subject of my visit, and persuade him into consenting."

But her heart sank within her when she thought of the cold, chill obstinacy of her husband; even her toilet could not distract her attention. The rich brocade enveloped her graceful figure, and the diamonds glistened in her luxuriant hair, yet they scarcely won a glance from the wearer: but Lady Marchmont had that perfect style of beauty which nothing could disfigure. Mere prettiness needs the becoming, but beauty asks nothing but itself.

The dinner was dull enough; and that worst sort of dulness which frets the spirits, by perpetual demands on their exertion. Lady Marchmont was thankful when it was over; and she entered her carriage to return home alone, for Lord Marchmont was going to his club, he had lately taken to whist-playing. As she alighted, there seemed an unusual stir in the hall; servants came forward to meet her, and then started back; she knew without asking that something was the matter, and

scarcely could she find voice to ask a question, which her own fears answered. An old domestic came forward; she knew him at once, he had lived for years with her uncle: she clasped her hands, her lips moved, but no sound came from them.

“Madam,” said the man, “we have ordered the travelling-carriage; I trust you will yet be in time to see my master.”

Lady Marchmont neither shrieked nor fainted, though lip and cheek blanched to the most deadly whiteness.

“In time to see him!” muttered she; and her hollow whisper seemed to reverberate through the hall. “Where is the carriage?” said she, hurrying to the door.

“Won’t your ladyship change your dress?” asked her favourite maid, who stood ready prepared for the journey.

“No,” exclaimed Henrietta, opening the hall door herself, and hurrying down the steps, where the carriage stood waiting: “tell the postilions to drive for life and death!” ex-

claimed she, springing in without assistance ; and, throwing herself back, drew the hood of her mantle over her face.

Her favourite woman followed her in silence ; she saw that the advice and directions with which she was generally ready, would not even be heard. Like the other servants, she was awed by her mistress's pale and speechless despair. During the whole of the journey, Henrietta never spoke but twice, and that was to urge the attendants to speed. Now and then a slight shudder passed through her frame ; it was when the image of her uncle rose too painfully distinct before her : she dared not ask even herself, should she see him again ?

On Lord Marchmont's return, he, too, was struck with the unusual appearance of confusion in his hall ; but anger was his predominant sensation when he heard that Henrietta had actually set off without waiting one moment.

“ She must be mad ! ” exclaimed he, “ to

go without consulting me, and without my permission!"

"Her ladyship thought, perhaps, that you would overtake her," said one of the attendants.

"She thought very wrong then," said Lord Marchmont, pettishly: "she may go on her wild-goose chase alone, I am not going half over the country on such a night as this. Why, it rains in torrents!"

The idea that it was more comfortable in the house than out of it, did much towards reconciling his lordship. He felt positively glad that, as his wife had acted without his sanction, she should be subject to all possible inconvenience, as if such could be felt in Henrietta's state of mind.

"Some of Sir Jasper's property," muttered he to himself, on his way to his dressing-room, "is yet unsettled. I do not think that there is any danger of his leaving it away from Henrietta; still, old men are capricious, and, perhaps, it is as well that Henrietta is on the

spot: at all events, if she had staid till to-morrow, I must have accompanied her; now, that will be perfectly needless."

He then allowed his valet to help him on with his dressing-gown; and, leaning back in the large well-cushioned chair, looking the very picture of luxurious ease, said, "I shall have a bottle of the old Burgundy, and tell Chloe he must exert himself to send me up some slight *chef-d'œuvre* for supper: I am sure that one needs something, after so much annoyance!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

RETURN HOME.

'Tis not my home — he made it home
With earnest love and care ;
How can it be my own dear home,
And he no longer there ?

I asked to meet my father's eyes,
But they were closed for me ;
My father, would that I were laid
In the dark grave with thee.

Where shall I look for constant love,
To answer unto mine ?
Others have many kindred hearts,
But I had only thine.

THE shades of the evening closed round just as Henrietta gave one sad start, and turned her face from the carriage-window, as she first recognised a familiar object: it was a clump of firs that grew on a hill, and were a land-

mark to the country for miles around. Now, they stood dark and phantom-like, thrown out by the crimson sky behind. Her heart sickened with impatience, the time seemed longer now that they drew so near; gradually, the long shadows mingled together, objects became confused, and it was necessary to light the lamps and flambeaux, and the avant-courier began to sound his horn: it was dangerous to risk meeting another carriage in the then state of the roads. All these preparations wound the anxiety of Lady Marchmont to a pitch of feverish agony: her cheek burnt, her hand trembled; she felt a sensation of choking in the throat; she felt confused, dizzy, and yet with one terror present and paramount over all. The carriage stopped; and, for the first time, a scream rose to her lips: she knew that it was at the lodge that they were stopping. It was but a moment, for the gates were open, the porter was not at his lodge, and they drove in.

“Let me out!” exclaimed Henrietta, as the heavy vehicle made its second pause at the hall-door. She sprang from the carriage,

and ran into the house : " Where is my uncle ? " cried she ; but the question was received in dead silence by the assembled servants : the silence was sufficient answer. " He is dead ! " said Henrietta, aloud : " I knew it ! " and she stood as if rooted to the ground in the middle of the hall.

None who saw her ever forgot her to their dying day ; her mantle had dropped on the ground, and her long hair, yet partly gathered up with jewels, fell in black masses over her shoulders. From the feverish pain in her temples, she had pushed it back from her forehead, and the whole face was exposed. It was like that of a corpse, with a strange unnatural spot of red burning on either cheek, and the large eyes fixed and glaring, but with no expression. No one had courage to speak to her, and there she stood for some minutes : a slight movement among the servants recalled her to herself ; she started, and hurried at once to her uncle's room. A dim light shewed the dark velvet bed, with its hearse-like plumes, and one or two spectral figures, that seemed to flit round

its obscurity: Henrietta saw but one object, the form extended cold and rigid, and the pale and set face, that would never more look affection upon her. Quietly, almost calmly, she approached; and, standing by the bed-side, gazed steadfastly on the body: at last, clasping her hands passionately together, "Leave me!" exclaimed she, throwing herself on her knees beside the bed. The women obeyed; but, ere the door closed, they heard the long suppressed sobs of the heart's uttermost agony.

Again and again did Henrietta start from her knees; and, dashing the tears from her eyes, gaze on the face of the dead, hoping, almost expecting, that some trace of life would appear, and as often did she dash herself down in fruitless despair: there was that on those cold, white features, none ever mistake.

"If I had but seen him, heard his last words, caught his last look, and told him yet once again how I loved him, I could bear his death; but to know that his latest look rested on others, that he wished to see me and did

not, is too much to bear!" and again a violent burst of weeping supplied the place of words.

An hour elapsed, and the attendants returned, but Lady Marchmont again dismissed them: that night she had resolved to watch beside the dead. It is well that the body sometimes sinks beneath the mind; Henrietta could not have borne such intense misery, but she grew faint. For nearly two days she had taken neither food nor rest, and even the relief of tears had been denied to her uncertain and feverish suspense. When the attendants came in the morning, they found her, her long black hair wet with tears, her cheek burning, but asleep beside the corpse. It was the heavy worn out slumber of exhaustion.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LAST NIGHT WITH THE DEAD.

How awful is the presence of the dead !
The hours rebuked, stand silent at their side ;
Passions are hushed before that stern repose ;
Two, and two only, sad exceptions share —
Sorrow and love,—and these are paramount.
How deep the sorrow, and how strong the love !
Seeming as utterly unfelt before.
Ah ! parting tries their depths. At once arise
Affection's treasures, never dreamed till then.
Death teaches heavy lessons, hard to bear ;
And most it teaches us what we have lost,
In losing those who loved us.

HENRIETTA crowded a life's suffering into the next week. There is need of change, even with the dead ; and each of the mournful rites preceding interment brought on a frantic outburst of sorrow. The placing the body in the coffin was a dreadful struggle ; but when it

became needful to screw down the lid, then, indeed, she felt that she had parted with her kind old uncle for ever. No entreaties could prevail on her to leave the room; she sat with her head enveloped in her mantle, her presence only indicated by a quick convulsive sob, at any pause in that peculiar and jarring sound. She had, on the second day, recognised, and spoken with her usual kindness to, the old servants; indeed, it was something of a consolation to gather every possible detail respecting her uncle. The account was soothing, rather than otherwise; he appeared in his usual health and spirits till the attack, which carried him off in two days. He had suffered but little pain; and his last words were a blessing on his beloved child.

“ If he had but been spared a few hours,” was her constant exclamation: “ his last look, his last word—I could lay down my life to have had them !”

Ah! the tender and solemn farewell beside the bed of death is, indeed, a consolation to the survivor! There is nothing so soothing as

to know that the last earthly wish has been confided to your fulfilment, the last expressions of earthly affection have been your own. The eyes closing to their last cold sleep, rested upon you, and were glad to rest; and your prayers were the latest music in the weary ear. It is some comfort to think that you sacrificed even your own sorrow in the beloved presence; and the thousand sad, slight offices, are remembered with such melancholy tenderness. But all this was denied to Henrietta, and hers was a nature to feel their privation most acutely; sensitive and affectionate, she exaggerated their omission with all the bitterness of self-reproach.

At length the day of the funeral came; and, till the coffin was carried to the hearse, Lady Marchmont never felt that she was quite parted from her uncle. She saw him, even as she had last gazed upon him, pale, cold, and awful; but still he was there. The coffin was to her like a shrine; all that she held most dear and most precious was within its dark and silent sanctuary. She sat in the room; she saw them bear it away: with one

strong and convulsive effort she rose, for nothing could prevent her following her more than father to the grave.

All parade had been avoided by Sir Jasper's express orders ; but the poor of the whole neighbourhood gathered to pay the last respect to the remains of their friend and benefactor. The churchyard was crowded ; and yet so deep was the stillness, that not one word was lost of the burial-service. Afterwards, it was a pleasure to Lady Marchmont to think of the affection evinced towards her uncle ; but, at the time, the numbers oppressed her : she would have given worlds to have been alone in the churchyard. With an agony too great for endurance, she heard the ropes creak as they lowered the coffin into the ground ; and when the gravel rattled on the lid, it struck too upon her heart. To her dying hour she was haunted by the fearful sound ; it came upon her ear in the stillness of night, making her start from her restless pillow ; and often did she hear it, amid light and music, turning her pale with the image of death even while

surrounded by gaiety and festival. But when they went to tread down the earth, it seemed to her like sacrilege; and, forgetting every thing in one strong emotion, she sprang forward to prevent it. The effort was too much; and, for the first time, she sank back in the arms of the servants in strong hysterics!

She was carried home quite exhausted; the only sign she gave of consciousness was, that when they were about to take her to the room which had formerly been her own, she raised her head, and feebly insisted on being taken to her uncle's. Every thing there was peculiarly his, and there she had gazed, for the last time, on his inanimate features; in that room she could call up his image more distinctly than elsewhere. The presence of the dead was around her, and it was dearer than aught else in the world beside.

CHAPTER XL.

THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE DEAD.

Pale Memory sits lone, brooding o'er the past,
That makes her misery. She looketh round,
And asks the wide world for forgetfulness :
She asks in vain ; the shadow of past hours
Close palpable around her ; shapes arise—
Shadows, yet seeming real ; and sad thoughts,
That make a night of darkness and of dreams.
Her empire is upon the dead and gone ;
With that she mocks the present, and shuts out
The future, till the grave, which is her throne,
Has absolute dominion.

SOME days elapsed before Lady Marchmont was able to leave her bed ; not that she suffered under actual illness, but the passion of sorrow had completely exhausted a frame naturally fragile. But youth, health, and time, are strong to console, and the first bitterness of regret inevitably passes ; but from that time

Henrietta never recovered her former gaiety : a well of grief had opened in her heart ; and nothing could stop the under-current of its deep, still waters. One idea was perpetually recurring, " There is no one to love me now ! " and, in proportion to the want of affection, the craving for it became stronger. While Sir Jasper lived, there was one human being in whom she could repose unlimited confidence ; one to whom, under any circumstances, she could turn for consolation ; one to whom even a trifle, concerning herself, was the dearest thing on earth : now, there was no one whom she could truly say loved her. With all her advantages, with all her fascination and her loveliness, she was flattered, admired, and courted, but not loved. How unsatisfactory was the homage of the eye and the lip only !

It was while dwelling on these topics of sadness and irritation, that her eye fell upon Lord Marchmont's letter of invitation to Sir Jasper. It arrived but a few moments after his death, and had never been opened ; she broke the seal, but had not patience to read

it through, its cold commonplace civility fretted her very heart. Impatiently, she tore it into fragments, and flung it in the fire.

“And this is the man,” exclaimed she, with a bitter laugh, “to whom I am united for my life; my inferior in every way — mean, shallow, heartless — I despise him too much for hatred!”

But, deep within her secret soul, Lady Marchmont felt she hated her husband; at that moment she would have been thankful to have given up the world, and spent the rest of her life in the gloomy seclusion of Meredith Place. She turned away from the future with a morbid feeling of discouragement: her first brilliant dream of the pleasures of the world had been broken; she had experienced their worthlessness, and their vanity; she felt that they were insufficient to fill up the void in her heart; they had nothing wherewith to satisfy the noblest and the best part of her nature; they contented neither her mind nor her heart. Lassitude and discontent were her predominant sensations: she had only one strong wish —

never to see Lord Marchmont again! She shuddered whenever his image came across her; and this dislike was increased by his letters. After a little decent sorrow had been put forth for the late "severe affliction," joined with some weariful truisms about resignation to the will of Providence, the rest of the epistle was filled up with reproofs about her ladyship's extraordinary and improper conduct in setting off without his consent!

Again was the letter flung in the fire, and again absolute loathing towards the writer arose in Henrietta's mind. Days passed on, quiet, languid, and sad. Every day that the weather permitted, Lady Marchmont visited her uncle's grave: it had become the principal object of her existence; and the weather gloomy, cold, and rainy, though at the beginning of summer, harmonised well with her present frame of mind. She seemed to desire nothing beyond her present mode of life; and yet Henrietta was mistaken in supposing that she had now discovered the existence for which she was really best suited. Her keen feelings, and active

fancy, would soon have needed employ : the imaginative temperament, above all others, requires society and excitement, else it preys too much on itself.

The truth was, that she had received a violent shock, and it would be long before either mind or body recovered their ordinary tone : but this mournful calm was soon disturbed by letters from Lord Marchmont, urging her return. Week after week she delayed it, till at last he formally announced his intention of coming to fetch her himself. Henrietta's grief was renewed in all its passionate violence ; leaving her uncle's grave was leaving himself ; and yet so subdued was her spirit, by its long indulgence of sorrow, that she could not find in herself even energy enough for resistance. The week that was yet to elapse, she spent in wandering through her uncle's favourite walks in hours of tearful vigil, beside his tomb, and in collecting together every trifle on which he had set a value. Again and again did she repeat her directions that every thing should be left in their old-accustomed places ;

the grim crocodile itself, that swung from the roof, acquired a value in her eyes.

The last evening arrived, and Henrietta returned from her prolonged visit to her uncle's grave. The misty moonlight that struggled through the black masses of gathering vapours, scarcely sufficed to guide her steps as she passed, languid and lingering, along the narrow path : she had passed through the churchyard the very evening before her former departure for London. How forcibly did the change that had taken place in herself, strike upon her now ! Then she was somewhat sad ; but it was a sadness soon to be flung aside. The future was before her brilliant, because unknown ; she then believed its promises, for she had not proved them, there was so much to which she looked forward : now she looked forward to nothing, for nothing seemed worth having. Alas ! the worst part of a heavy sorrow, is the despondency which it leaves behind !

CHAPTER XLI.

THE LABORATORY.

'Tis a fair tree, the almond-tree : there Spring
Shews the first promise of her rosy wreath ;
Or ere the green leaves venture from the bud,
Those fragile blossoms light the winter bough
With delicate colours, heralding the rose,
Whose own Aurora they might seem to be.
What lurks beneath their faint and lovely red ?
What the dark spirit in those fairy flowers ?
'Tis death !

THE night was unusually dreary as, for the last time, Henrietta sat listening to the wind that moaned, in fitful intervals, round the ancient house. There was not another sound ; she seemed the only creature alive in the world, so profound was the quiet, and so dreary. The red gleams of the wood fire flickered over the black wainscot in fantastic combinations ; the long shadows from the lamp fell dark upon

the floor; and the window, whose curtains were still undrawn, looked out upon a sky covered with heavy clouds, from whence the wan and misty moon sometimes emerged, but oftener only indicated her presence by a dim white ring, amid the dusky vapours.

Henrietta kept wandering to and fro like a disturbed spirit; now watching the shelves, covered with dusty volumes, now gazing on the different articles, scattered in the same confusion as when Sir Jasper last used his laboratory. On a small table, drawn close to his arm-chair, lay opened a large book, which Henrietta stopped, every now and then, in her troubled walk, to read.

“It may easily be done!” muttered she; and her fine features set with an expression of stern determination. Again she read the passage that had riveted her attention; and, rising from her seat, carried the still open volume, and laid it on a slab by the furnace in the laboratory: it was a celebrated treatise on poisons, written in the fifteenth century. The grate was laid with charcoal, to that she put

a light, and then, as if she had forgotten something, hurried to the library, and carefully locked the door. First returning to see that the fire had kindled, she then went to the window, which, with the first gleam of moonlight, she cautiously unclosed, and stepped into the shrubbery. A small drizzling rain was beginning to fall, but she heeded it not; and, approaching a tree that stood near, began to gather the green fruit, with which its branches were thickly covered. Any one who had seen her, might have been pardoned for believing, from that hour, in supernatural appearances. Her tall figure was wrapped in a loose white robe, and her long black hair hung down to her waist, already glistening with the raindrops. The moonlight fell directly on her face, whose features seemed rigid as those of a statue, while the paleness was that of a corpse; but the large gleaming eyes, so passionate and so wild, belonged to life — life, racked by that mental agony, life, and human life, only knows.

It was an almond-tree beneath whose boughs she stood. A few weeks since they had been

luxuriant with rosy blossom — fragile and delicate flowers, heralds most unsuited to the bitter fruit. The almond was now just formed in its green shell, and of these Henrietta gathered a quantity, and bore them into the library in the skirt of her dress. She then sat down by the fire, and carefully separated the stone from the pulp, which she burnt; and her next task was to extract the kernel, which she did by means of a heavy pestle and the hearth. The kernels were next crushed together, and placed to simmer over the furnace.

From her childhood she had been accustomed to watch, and often to aid, in her uncle's chemical experiments; she was, therefore, not at a loss, as a complete novice in the science would have been. More than once she referred to the huge volume that lay unclasped before her; and, at a certain point, she approached a curiously wrought old cabinet; from one of its recesses she took a glass mask, and some strongly aromatic vinegar. With a steady hand she fixed the mask on her face, and again

approached the furnace. The strange-looking chamber, the red glare of the charcoal, her tall form, and long black hair loose, realised the wildest dream of one of the sorceresses of old, bending over herb and drug, to form their potent spells. Once she grew faint; and, springing to the outer room, she hastily undid the mask, and gasped for breath at the open window. She was deadly pale; but the exquisite features were even stern in their expression of unconquerable will.

Again she resumed her fearful task, and hours passed by; and she started as a red glimmer fell on the open page—it was the crimson coming of daybreak that gleamed through a crevice in the closed shutters. But her task was done! She snatched up two tiny vials, and poured into each a few drops, like singularly clear water; but in each of those drops was—death! The glass stoppers were inserted; the bottles hermetically sealed; and, depositing them in a secret drawer of a small casket, she locked it, put the little key on a

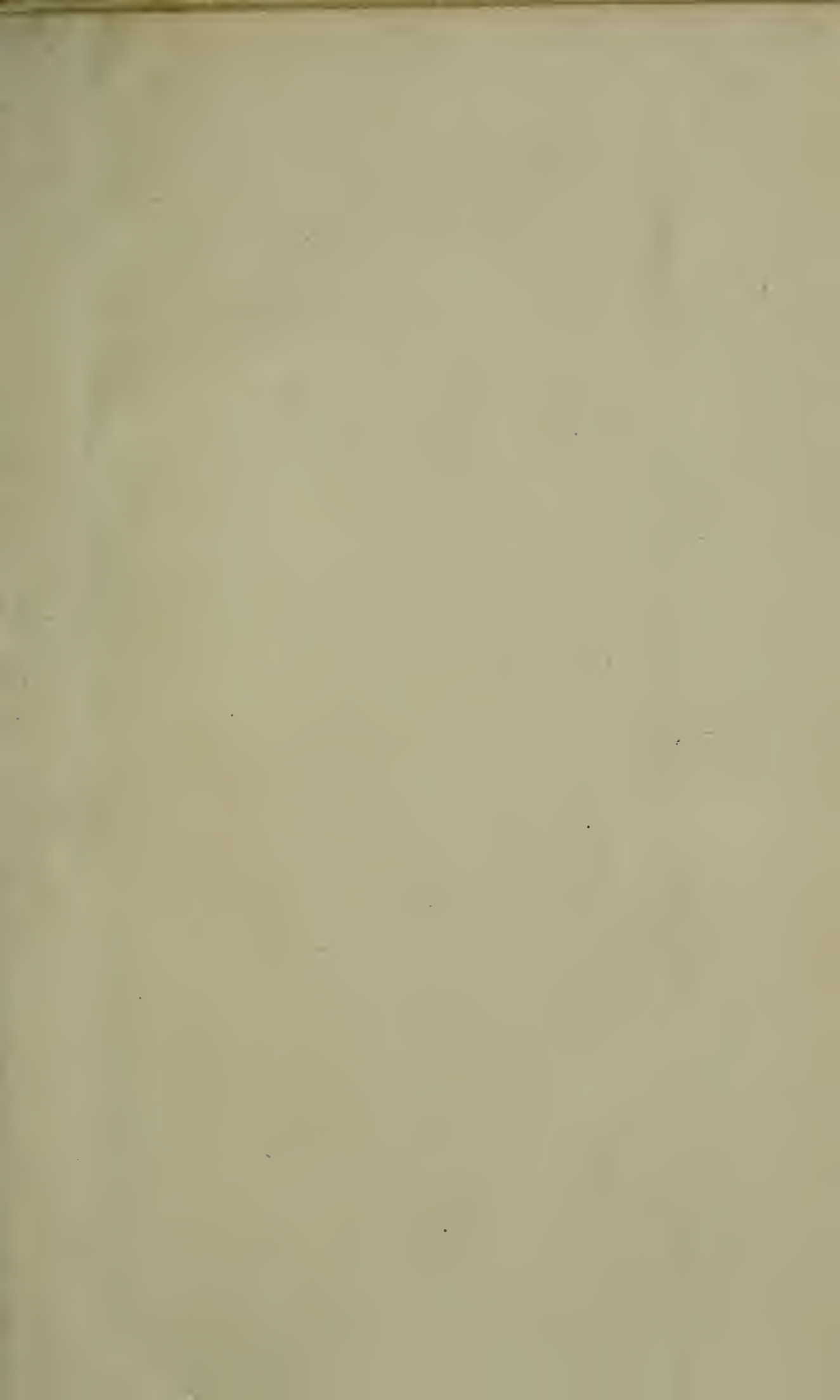
chain that she always wore of her uncle's hair ; and, pressing it to her heart, exclaimed, " Now I am mistress of my fate in this world ! " Her rapid movement made her long, loose sleeve, catch in the glass mask, which fell to the ground, and was shivered in a thousand fragments.

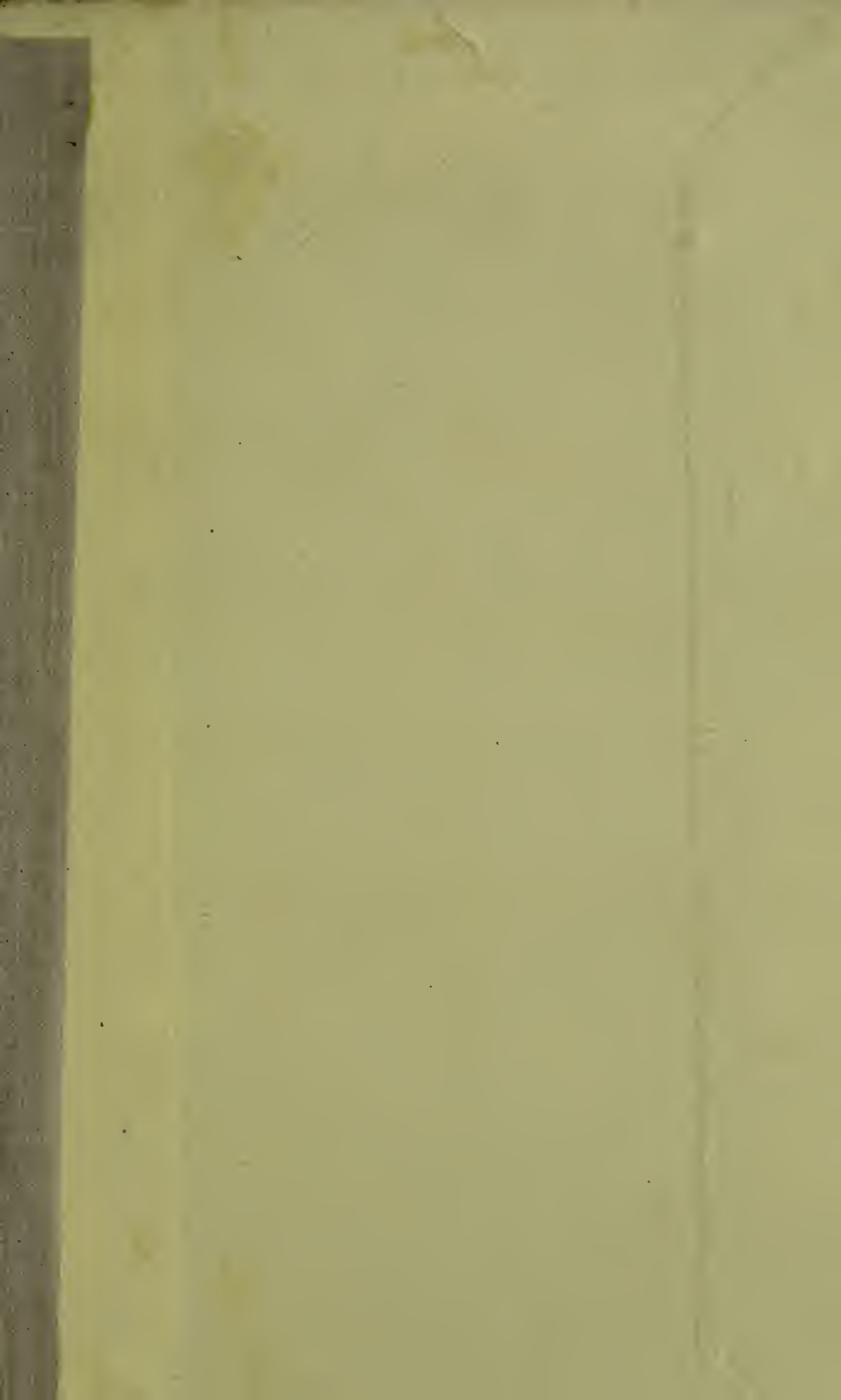
" It matters not," exclaimed she ; " I need its services no more ! " Hastily she glanced around ; and, returning to the laboratory, cleared away all traces of the night's work, and extinguished the charcoal. She then flung open the windows, for the atmosphere was heavy and oppressive ; but she started back as the fresh air blew upon her throbbing temples, but brought no colour to her wan lip and cheek. Heavily her eyes closed before the cheerful light, and she turned away with a sick shudder. The closed curtains made the bedroom still dark ; and, extinguishing the lamp, she flung herself on the bed. Over tired and excited, it was long before she slept ; sleep came at last, but it was broken and feverish ;

and the interrupted breath, and the red spot that soon burned on the cheek, told that the dream was one of pain and fear, and that slumber was not rest.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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